The DAY of the LORD

Philotheos Zikas

AN INTERPRETATION OF PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE THESSALONIANS



Pastor Philotheos Zika photographed against background statue of Paul on the Damascus Road.

Photograph by Fred M. Do

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A fresh interpretation of
Paul's letters to the Church
of the Thessalonians

by

PHILOTHEOS ZIKAS

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PREFACE

These studies on the Pauline writings began back in 1928 while I was a student at the American Board School of Religion in Athens. This school has since merged and become the Near East School of Theology in Lebanon. Under the guidance of my beloved teacher and friend, the late Dr. Ernest Pye, this work took its first and shorter form. When I was called upon to teach at the Theological Institute, which functioned for several years in order to prepare ministers for the Greek Evangelical Churches, it became necessary for me to carry on these studies in greater detail.

The thought of rendering them into English occurred to me for the first time in 1952 while I was a World Church Fellow at the Chicago Theological Seminary. At that time I had the opportunity of following some courses on the Pauline writings which were taught by Dr. Robert Grant. I would never have ventured, however, to embark on this ambitious task if it had not been for the encouragement and manifold assistance of two beloved friends, Dr. Henry David Gray and the Rev. Neil H. Swanson, Jr. I feel greatly indebted to them, but also to Mary Elizabeth Speare (now Mrs. William Carey) to whom fell the task of typing the manuscript and of rendering my Greek-English into proper form.

For the basic texts, I used the American Revised Standard Version in English and the twenty-second

critical edition of the Greek text by D. E. Nestle which was published in 1956 for the American Bible Society of New York.

My only wish and prayer is that the readers of these studies may be helped to an understanding of what the Apostle really wanted to say to the first recipients of his letters and that we all may be helped to a clearer insight into the eternal truths which he preached for our spiritual growth and for the glory and the promotion of God's cause on earth.

Alexandroupolis, Greece
January 27, 1965

PHIL ZIKAS

INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR

by

HENRY DAVID GRAY, PH. D.
Former Editor, „The Congregationalist"
Minister, South Congregational Church, Hartford

I first met Phil Zikas in Athens, nearly 15 years ago. We had not been conversing more than five minutes before he said, "You must come to Thrace. Think of it! To walk in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul. Bring your young people with you. We'll sing in the prison at Philippi, read by the riverside where Lydia was baptized—the first European Christian—and we will stop at Neapolis and Amphipolis and Apollonia and Thessaloniki."

The appeal was irresistible. And so it came to pass that twenty-two young Americans, with their minister, followed the pathway of Paul. B-u-t the Rev. Philotheos Zikas of Alexandroupolis (to use his full name) had indicated only a tiny bit of all that was in store.

As we visited each place, with our Bibles in our hands, we read the record in the Book of Acts and in the letters of the Apostle Paul. *This was only the beginning.* When we had finished reading, Pastor Zikas started speaking. With the insight of one to whom the language of the New Testament is a native tongue, with the perspicacity of a scholar trained in archeology and anthropology, and with the Christian understanding gained through years of pastoral service including the gathering of

many new Churches, this man made Paul our contemporary.

Is Paul a hero of the faith? So is this seven-time refugee, Phil Zikas. Is Paul a founder of new Churches? So is this Greek contemporary of ours who has galvanized ten or a dozen Greek communities. Is Paul a thoughtful scholar? So is Phil Zikas, who lacks only a thesis to earn his doctor's degree. Is Paul a practical man, able to guide new Churches into independence? So is Pastor Zikas, brother-in-Christ to more than a score of Protestant pastors in Greece, builder of the camp at Makri, and of Church structures throughout Macedonia and Thrace.

Is Paul a mystic? So is this modern interpreter of the great apostle; as he stands beside the Castalean Spring at the foot of Mount Parnassus, near Delphi, the moonlit night becomes a gleam of God . . . a touch of the Eternal . . . in the midst of time. Is Paul in danger and a refugee? So is Phil Zikas; and so has he been since childhood days in Asia Minor when first he saw hundreds of Armenians driven into the sea; and one battered pitcher is the sole material article which connects today with yesterday.

What more shall I say of my dearest friend? Within these pages you will feel the strength and joy of the man; you will know assuredly that in persecution often, in trial again and again, here is one who believes with all his heart that "Love Never Fails". And you too will come to share this central conviction of Philotheos Zikas.

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF I THESSALONIANS

In approaching an exegetical study of I Thessalonians, we must begin with a preliminary investigation of all information surrounding the epistle itself. Such a study involves answers to questions in several areas. 1) Who was the author of the epistle? 2) Who were the recipients of the epistle? 3) What were the circumstances and events which necessitated its writing?

The authorship of I Thessalonians has never been questioned on serious grounds. It is accepted as one of the Pauline writings which found its place in the authorized canon of the Holy Scriptures.

Who was Paul the author of this epistle? Paul, or Saul as was his Jewish name, was of ancient Hebrew lineage, "a Hebrew born of Hebrews" as he says (Phil. 3: 5). He belonged to the most conservative sect of his religious nation that of the Pharisees, and he was ever consistent in practicing its beliefs, for he says, "I lived as a Pharisee" (Acts 26: 5b). In doing so he followed faithfully the pattern set before him by his parents or, possibly, by a long line of Pharisaic ancestors, for according to the best manuscripts, he was "a son of Pharisees" (Acts 23: 6). Apparently his family lived outside of Palestine at one time as he was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but he was brought up in Jerusalem where he received his religious training at the feet of Gamaliel, a rabbi celebrated among the Pharisees (Acts 22: 3).

He made far greater progress in his indoctrination than many others of his age (Gal. 1: 14a).

Due to this early training, Saul was able not only to live but also to teach "exactly", as a rabbi, the parodosis or tradition of his religious inheritance. He became an outstanding interpreter of the Mosaic law, explaining and teaching its authentic meaning. His passion for the law proved him to be "zealous" in propagating Pharisaism even when it meant enforcing it by violent means (Gal. 1: 13-14). His life concern seemed to be the promotion of the traditional exegesis or commentary of the Mosaic law among his people that they might prove themselves faithful to God and be found righteous in His sight. Living in the vast Roman Empire, whose citizenship he had inherited (Acts 22: 27-28), Saul's vision must have been enlarged so that his ambition was to lead to the knowledge of Jehovah and His law all of the nations under the Roman rule. It was a time when a great deal of Jewish proselytizing was being carried on, as Jesus Himself remarked (Mt. 23: 15). The success of this proselytizing to Judaism should not be minimized for there were many proselytes in many cities.

There had started, however, within his own nation, the cradle of Pharisaism, a religious movement which he calls the "Way" (Acts 22: 4) and which was making a threatening headway among his own people and challenging the very existence of his most cherished religious convictions. This new trend was undoubtedly, to Saul's mind, openly antagonistic to all Pharisaic ideas. The leader of this religious movement had been bitterly despised by the hierarchy of the Jews who had succeeded, in fact, in putting Him to the most shameful and cruel death on a cross, but who had seemed unable

to check the spread of this new teaching. A steadily growing number of Jews were daily converted to this movement and ardently heralded and witnessed everywhere that God had raised their leader from the dead. They also asserted that Jesus, their leader, was the Messiah, the Anointed One, whom the whole Jewish nation had been awaiting so eagerly for many long centuries. He was the Lord, the only begotten Son of the Almighty, and they expected Him to return from the heavens to establish His eternal kingdom and to judge all His adversaries as well as all men dead or alive.

This new teaching seemed to Saul to destroy all Pharisaic beliefs and to shatter all the lofty Judaistic ideals that were so dear to this young, zealous rabbi in Jerusalem. Swiftly drawing his conclusions, he reacted immediately and violently. The "Way" should be cut short; nothing of this religious movement should be left either in Jerusalem or anywhere else; he should act promptly and decisively. After the severe persecution of Stephen, the deacon of the first church in Jerusalem (Acts 7: 58, 22: 19-22), Saul asked for and was granted the authority to go to other cities to uproot the seed of this new teaching. He would paralyze the whole movement and bring it to an end by putting all its advocates in jail (Acts 26: 9-11). Saul's evil intentions were known throughout the country even before his journey had begun and the Christians had already been informed of his new mission (Acts 9: 13-14).

Before Saul had a chance to reach even his first city, he had an extraordinary and momentous experience which robbed him of all his self confidence, self assertions and energy. On the road to Damascus he had a dramatic encounter with the risen Lord. His limbs could no longer

support him and he fell prostrate on the ground enveloped in a celestial light that rendered him blind (Acts 9: 1ff.). Saul realized then that he had been chosen to do exactly the opposite of what he had been trying to do. He was to become a special envoy to carry to all corners of the earth the teaching of this new religion. The leader whom he had persecuted he was now to proclaim as the Lord and Saviour not only of his own nation, but also of all men. He was to help open their eyes so that they would turn from darkness to light (Acts 26: 18).

Paul was sure that he had been set apart by the Lord even before birth for this new mission, and he tried with admirable zeal and earnest endeavor to prove himself competent for this task. During the 18 years of ministry before he came to Macedonia, he preached the gospel of Christ in Syria, Cilicia and Galatia, and he made many converts, both Jew and Gentile, to the saving grace of Him whom he would serve faithfully to his death.

His intention was to go and preach the gospel in the Province of Asia, the old homeland of the Hittites, which is now the Turkish land around the Black Sea, but he was "forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" (Acts 16: 6). While in Troas, or the Troy of the *Iliad*, "a vision appeared to him in the night", a Macedonian man standing beseeching him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us". Following the vision, Paul made a direct voyage to Samothrace and from there the following day to Neapolis, which is called today Kavala, and proceeded to Philippi where he founded the first church in Macedonia and on the European continent (Acts 16: 6ff.).

On this Macedonian journey, which is considered to be his second missionary journey, he was accompanied

by three colleagues, Silas (Acts 15:40, 16: 19), Timothy (Acts 16: 3), and Luke ("we" Acts 16: 10, 13). Apparently Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, did not proceed with the rest of the group beyond Philippi as we have no clues indicating his movements. We can not be sure whether he left before the others were put into prison or at some later time, but we can be sure that he left before the others reached Thessaloniki for, beginning with the seventeenth chapter of Acts, he uses the third person plural pronoun "they" instead of the "we" used in the preceding chapter.

Paul came to Thessaloniki with the marks of the rod still on his body. Each of the many blows which the lictors had inflicted upon him was to him a token of Christ's approval of his service and evidence of the path of experiences through which he had to go. He writes later from his prison cell to the Philippians, "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine" (Phil. 1: 29, 30). Paul also came, however, with the sweet memory of his spiritual children in that important town in Macedonia and with his heart filled with that abounding feeling of success which comforted, strengthened and inspired him.

When Paul entered Thessaloniki, it was a flourishing city, capital of all Macedonia and seat of the Roman governor. This city, which had been built around 315 B.C. by Cassandros in honor of his wife Thessaloniki, daughter of Philip and the stepsister of Alexander the Great, enjoyed the advantages of a moderate climate and fertile surrounding plains enriched by the waters of three rivers, the Axios, the Aliakmon and the Loudias.

As it had been located on the hills surrounding the innermost bay of the Thermaic Gulf, Thessaloniki had soon become an important point of communication and transit between East and West both for sea and land travel. During the Roman period, the great Egnatia Road which connected Rome by land with its Eastern provinces traversed the city so that imports and exports, merchants and sojourners flowed through this city adding their wealth and ideas to Thessaloniki's great natural wealth and culture.

Luke gives a very brief description of Paul's ministry in this capital city. For three Sabbath days, he tells us, Paul addressed himself to the congregation of the Jewish synagogue (Acts 17: 2). He took into his hands the Old Testament Scriptures and, following his accustomed method of procedure, he interpreted for them the prophetic word that Christ should suffer death and be resurrected. The amazing idea that the Messiah, whom they all had been expecting, should die and rise again had never occurred to them. They had never detected such a thing in the reading of the Law and the prophets, but when it was once demonstrated by a sound interpretation it became possible for some of them to realize that the Jesus whom Paul proclaimed was indeed the Messianic King.

The results of this preaching in the synagogue were gratifying indeed. The number of Jewish converts was not large but it was a nucleus with which to found a church. The Greek converts to Christianity excelled in number those of the Jews. They were "a great many", or as the original text says, *πλῆθος πολὺ* (plythos poly), much crowd or multitude. Among the converts were also a few of the leading women, again the original Greek

text says, *οὐκ ὀλίγαι* (ouk oligae), not a few, but rather a considerable number. Apparently these women had never become full proselytes of Judaism but were attracted rather by the monotheistic teachings of the Jews and the loftier life and moral conduct which they presented. One could find in every synagogue a number of people who not only sympathized with the Hebrew religion but also modified their lives and religious practices because of their contact with Judaism. They made liberal contributions, as Cornelius, the centurion of the Roman army at Caesarea, is said to have done (Acts 10: 1); some, like Timothy's grandparents, tolerated intermarriage between the Jews and the Greeks.

Besides his public preaching and the exposition of the Scriptures, Paul also carried on a personal evangelism. He met privately all who would accept his message, admonishing and comforting them with words of instruction in the Christian faith and way of life (I Thess. 2: 11-12).

It is not possible to say how long Paul and his helpers stayed in Thessaloniki. If all of their converts had been Jews, it would not have been hard for them to grasp the meaning of the teachings concerning the Messianic hope. Paul's expository preaching on the "Messianic passages" of the Old Testament, once adopted as authentic, would not demand too much time to understand and put into practice. The Gentiles who had some attachment to the Jewish community and synagogue would also not have been long in grasping Paul's message. In these cases the three Sabbaths would have been ample time, but the question arises whether there would be sufficient time if the great majority of the converts were Gentiles. The text of the first epistle implies that they

had "turned to God from idols" (I Thess. 1:9). In this case the apostles' stay in Thessaloniki must have lasted much longer than the period one understands from the "three Sabbaths".

The question also arises as to whether the Thessalonian believers organized themselves into a church community after the departure of the apostle or whether Paul had a share in organizing the church. Did Paul have personal knowledge of the who and how of "those who labor among you" (I Thess. 5:12)? Again, would two or three weeks be enough for the Thessalonians to come to know the character and motives of him who dealt with each of them as a father would his own children (I Thess. 2:11) and who worked day and night with his hands for the livelihood of the whole team of missionaries (II Thess. 3:8)?

While Paul was preaching in Thessaloniki, the Philippian Christians had organized into an active and exemplary church. Paul, commenting on their concern for him and his work, mentions that he twice received money from them while he was in Thessaloniki (Phil. 4:15-16a). Could they have accomplished this work of organization and stewardship in just the short period of three Sabbaths? From this indication of the activity of the Philippians during this period and from the questions concerning the progress of the Thessalonians in conversion and organization, one would be inclined to say that the three Sabbaths of which Luke writes in Acts refer only to particular occasions on which Paul taught in the Jewish synagogue and that his stay in Thessaloniki itself must have lasted much longer.

Nevertheless his stay in Thessaloniki was not long enough. There remained much to be done when the

fanatic Jews made Paul's premature departure imperative. The gospel preached in Thessaloniki did not point to an easy way. The news of the bitter experiences of the apostles in Philippi had been disclosed to the Thessalonians and they naturally worried about similar persecutions which they too might have to face. It was not long, in fact, before they did indeed share such circumstances and afflictions (I Thess. 3 : 2-4). Suffering seemed to be the course of the Christian church, as one writer has put it, the church has been fed on the blood of the saints. The greatest lesson that a Christian has to learn is the lesson of the cross, and this infant church in Thessaloniki was not spared this lesson.

The Jews, filled with jealousy against Paul whom they considered to be a dangerous rival to the religion revealed to them by God. could not vie with him in strength of word and argument and therefore decided to launch a direct personal attack on him. Paul not only presented a Messiah contrary to their idea of a Messiah King who would overthrow the Roman authority and tyrannical power in Israel and the other nations, but he also offered free and easy entrance to the blessed kingdom to Gentiles who had always been considered inferior beings. In so doing Paul was surrendering to the heathen nations the special and divine privilege of the Jewish people, who believed that the freedom and glory which was to come because of the Christ whom they expected was to be shared by Israelites only. The Jews, therefore, closed the doors of the synagogue to Paul and organized a riot against him and his colleagues. Their aim was to compel the apostles to leave the city.

Paul had already faced very strong opposition among the Jews because of the message which he delivered to

the nations of the motherland, and among the Judaizer Christians because of his ministry in Galatia. The dispute which had arisen in Galatia over his teachings could not be settled even by the so-called Apostolic Council (Acts 15). The Judaizer Christians would not oppose the admission of Gentiles into Christianity but they insisted that as Christianity was considered to be the fulfillment of real Judaism, these Gentiles would also have to be subject to the Jewish form of legalism from which the Judaizers would not think of freeing themselves (Gal.).

That I Thessalonians 2: 16 implies that some of the zealots who had been causing trouble for Paul on the Asiatic land had followed him to Thessaloniki and helped to stir up the riot against him cannot be definitely inferred nor is there evidence against such an implication. It seems, in fact, very probable that other zealots, like Paul before his experience on the Damascus road, would have undertaken to achieve the ends which Paul now denounced so strongly. These zealots might have pursued him not only in their own neighborhood but even on European soil.

The Jews who had been cool and indifferent to what Paul had said when his preaching began in Thessaloniki now became aroused with envy "and taking some wicked fellows", loungers in the market and other Gentiles of low sorts, they gathered a crowd and set the city in an uproar. The clamoring crowd was led to Jason's house where Paul was supposed to be but they were unable to find the apostle. The house of Jason must have been either Paul's lodging or the place where they held their special gatherings for a fuller indoctrination of the new converts to Christian teaching, prayer and worship.

Jason is a Greek name but it was also used by the Jews. Paul mentions in Romans 16:21 a relation of his by this name, and if this is the same person, it means that Paul had some kinship in Thessaloniki who would naturally have given him the kind of hospitality which has always been customary in this part of the world. "Jason has received them" means that he took them into his house (Acts 17:7).

After leading the mob to Jason's house and not finding the missionaries there, the fanatic leaders dragged Jason and some of the brethren to the city authorities. It did not matter that the apostles were not there, for those who had accepted their message and had sheltered them were also guilty. The crowd shouted dramatically at the top of their voices, *βοῶντες* (vohontes), against those who had turned the world, *οἰκουμένην* (oecoumenin), upside down by coming to their town to cause trouble and by "acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, Jesus" (Acts. 17:7).

One cannot but be astonished at the acts of religious fanatics. These very same Jews shared the secret hope of the Messiah king's coming. They wished indeed that he would come in their own life time, and although they yearned for their own liberation from the Roman bondage, they now forgot their hopes and longings and turned against those who shared a common hope and expectation. They wished to destroy this movement and the participants in it who heralded another king instead of Caesar. For the Roman authorities this was indeed a grave charge; it was the same charge which had been made against Jesus in the presence of Pilate (Lk. 23:2-3). Were these two identical charges mere coincidence? Most naturally this accusation caused a

great disturbance among the public and the city officials (Acts 17: 8).

Where were the apostles during all of these demonstrations? Most likely they had been led by the brethren to some safer place in the town to await the quieting of the uproar. They were not present when the magistrates took the matter into their own hands. The magistrates did not fail to realize that the real issue was not what the rioters tried to impress upon them but a religious difference which had caused great agitation and violent antagonism among some fanatics. They knew only that such riots were not to be tolerated and they made it clear that no further disturbances were to take place. Jason, who must have been a man of substance and rank, and the rest of his companions were mildly dealt with by the city authorities but they were told that some security would have to be given to guarantee that the strangers leave the city immediately and never return. The brethren made all of the necessary preparations to hurry "Paul and Silas" out of the city that same night before any further incident could occur. Paul and Silas travelled during the night until they reached Beroea, or Veria as it is now called, some fifty miles northwest of Thessaloniki (Acts 17: 10).

The pressure upon his heart and mind from leaving behind a newly formed church which badly needed his presence and help must have been very heavy indeed for Paul. He no doubt wished to return to them and probably inferred from the mild treatment by the magistrates that it might be possible for him to do so. Twice he decided to make an attempt to return but apparently was informed each time that the authorities were determined to put into effect their decree (I Thess. 2:18).

Paul wasted no time, however, in Beroea. He and Silas went directly to the synagogue where they discovered that the Jews were gentle and noble minded (Acts 17: 11). They showed much readiness and diligence in daily examining the Scriptures, and "many of them. . .believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men" (Acts 17: 12). The news of Paul's arrival in Beroea and of his work there must soon have reached the Jewish agitators in Thessaloniki for some men, desperate and determined to do him harm, followed him to Beroea, and began "stirring up and inciting the crowds" (Acts 17: 13). The situation must have been somewhat different in Beroea as the agitators wished to take the situation into their own hands rather than to appeal to the city authorities. When the brethren sensed that Paul's life was in danger, they hurried him immediately out of the city and sent him on his way to Athens. In all probability he was led to the small port on the western coast of the Thermaic Gulf which is called Methoni today, near the ancient city of Kitros, and from there he proceeded probably by boat to Athens. He was accompanied only by a body guard which was composed of faithful Beroean brethren while "Silas and Timothy remained" in Beroea (Acts 17: 14).

Athens seemed to be a safe place for Paul. He sent his body guard back to Beroea with the instructions that Silas and Timothy should meet him as soon as possible (Acts 17: 14-15). While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he started again his cherished ministry in the Jewish synagogue and in the market place (agora). He met some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers and indulged in discussion with them. They could not seem to communicate with one another, however, for there

was no common ground upon which to meet. Some of these intellectuals called him "an idle babbler" while others thought that he was introducing some foreign deities (Acts 17: 16-18). After a few days he was led to the Areopagus Council and was asked to clarify the teaching which seemed so strange to them. Paul, seizing this opportunity to make what is considered to be one of his most outstanding speeches ever recorded, began by complimenting the Athenians on their piousness. In going about the city he had found many objects of awe and worship, even an altar with the inscription "to an unknown God". Paul apparently thought that this altar might become a point of contact, or a ground on which to base his Christian message. In other places in his discourses with the Jews and with the sympathizers of Judaism he had found the common ground of the Messianic hope on which to begin his teaching.

Paul's assumption that "the Athenians were in search of God and that they ignorantly worshipped Him" does not seem to be sound. Regardless of their philosophic notion of a God-spirit or an understanding and knowing mind, the Athenians were superstitious pagans with many gods whom they had continually to please in order to divert the gods' revengeful wrath. To divert the wrath of any god whom they might have forgotten, they had constructed the altar to an unknown god. If the people had conceived this unknown god as the Being about whom Paul preached, then it is improbable that they would have constructed simply an altar "to an unknown god". Nothing in any record or archeological finding justifies that the God, the almighty Creator of whom Paul preached, had any relation to this unknown god.

Paul, therefore, failed to find in this unknown god a real ground of communication on which the Athenians could step. He did not impress the Council with the beauty and truth of his message. It is likely that they misunderstood him as intending to introduce two new divinities, "a man" by whom God would judge the world and the personified event, "the resurrection". When the people in Athens did not respond to his message, Paul proceeded to Corinth, a great commercial center, and lodged with some fellow tentmakers, Aquila and Priscilla.

As we have mentioned earlier, when Paul reached Athens, he instructed the Beroean brethren who had escorted him to tell Silas and Timothy to come to him without delay, most quickly ὡς τάχιστα (ος tahista) (Acts 17: 15). This they must have done as is evident by I Thessalonians 3: 12 where Paul writes, "Therefore when we could bear it no longer we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone μόνοι (monoi) and we sent Timothy". From this passage we can not only see that the three were together in Athens but also that they must have sent Timothy back to Thessaloniki while Paul and Silas remained in Athens. The "alone" and the "we" cannot mean the editorial plural as Paul was very careful and exact in his use of "I" when the situation demanded it (I Thess. 2: 18, 3: 5).

It is very probable that by the time Silas and Timothy arrived in Athens they had heard some unpleasant news about the Thessaloniki situation. As the faith of the Thessalonians had been known as exemplary in Achaia (I Thess. 1: 3b), no time was lost in going to their aid. Timothy was therefore sent on this very special and delicate mission to them.

In reconstructing these events, we must consider why Paul sent Timothy on this demanding mission rather than going himself. How much Paul must have wished to go himself on this mission to the Thessalonians. His work in Thessaloniki, as he looked back on it, had had a bright beginning; all things had been going well and the new converts had made good progress in their indoctrination into the Christian faith. The abrupt cutting short of his work, however, had left many unaccomplished things; many pressing questions were troubling his heart. Would it be possible for those newly come to the knowledge of the gospel truth which he had preached to stand the trying circumstances and afflictions which he sensed they would have to undergo? He could not believe that the trouble was on his account alone and that now the brethren would be left in peace. This could have been so if the cause of the trouble in Thessaloniki had been like that of Philippi, but no one from Philippi had pursued him in Thessaloniki whereas they had pursued him from Thessaloniki to Beroea and aroused threatening hostility which had obliged him to make a second hasty flight. Had he labored "in vain"? Such must have been his uneasy thoughts and disturbing questions as he looked back over his work in Thessaloniki and heard the news which Timothy and Silas probably brought to him in Athens.

Had the danger been to himself alone, Paul probably never would have left his work in Thessaloniki. We know that he had attempted several times to return (I Thess. 2: 18), possibly even while he was in Beroea, before his persecutors had arrived and made it impossible for him to fulfill his desire. He was chafing under his inability to return to that great city in which his work

had started to flourish so gloriously but in which as he put it, "Satan blocked his way". Paul had never been afraid of what might happen to himself but he was very careful to avoid situations in which his converts might suffer.

Jason and the other brethren had not only provided security to insure Paul's behavior but they had also arranged his departure (Acts 17: 10-11, 15). They were responsible for his conduct and if he returned to Thessaloniki their property would be confiscated. The fact that the magistrates of Thessaloniki did not believe the grave heresy charges against the apostles, which would have meant capital punishment, did not, nevertheless, soften their determination to prevent the recurrence of similar disturbances and hence they had to take these very strict measures against Paul and his guarantors. They made it more than clear that their decision was irrevocable.

The news which Timothy brought back concerning the spiritual condition of the Thessalonian converts was good indeed; they were holding fast to their faith. There were, however, other problems of which Timothy informed Paul which are clearly expressed in the epistle itself. Since he could not go to them in person, Paul must have resolved to handle these problems by letter, the first letter written to a church since the circular letter containing the Apostolic Decree mentioned in Acts 15.

From the few clues which are given to us in the epistle, namely that it must have been written at some time when the three apostles were together (I Thess. 1: 1), after their experience in Philippi (I Thess. 2: 2), and after the three of them had been together in Athens and Timothy sent back to Thessaloniki (I Thess. 3: 1-2), and from the

series of events as we have reconstructed them by means of Luke's account and Paul's epistle, we would set the writing of the epistle at the time when the three apostles were together in Corinth. The first epistle, therefore, must have been written early in Paul's eighteen months' stay in Corinth (Acts 18: 11) somewhere between 49 and 52 A.D.

PARAPHRASE OF I THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER ONE

Verse 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy unto the church of the Thessalonians which exists in unity with God the Father and the Master (or Lord) Jesus Christ. We greet you wishing you grace (or loving kindness) and peace of mind and heart in the sense of security that comes from God our common Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 2 / *Verse 3* We give thanks to God always for you all whenever we pray, remembering you, recalling to memory unceasingly the course of your good conduct which springs out of your conviction respecting Jesus Christ, that through Him we gain the kind of life which admits to the Kingdom of God (i.e. your "work of faith"), because we remember the work and trouble to which you affectionately put yourselves in behalf of others for their eternal welfare (i.e. "your labor of love"), because we remember also your unreserved loyalty to your deliberately chosen purpose, viz. to gain the eternal life of our Master Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, (i.e. your patience and hope).

Verse 4 / *Verse 5* And we thank God because we know, brethren dearly beloved by God, what choice you made, in so far as, or because our gospel did not come to you merely in spoken words

as some favored theory of a man would come, but it was accompanied by power and by the Holy Spirit, which gave great assurance regarding the essence and outcome of the mission to you, just as you know because we were the kind of men through whom God worked in your midst ἐν ὑμῖν (en hymin) for your own welfare δι' ὑμᾶς (thi' hymas).

Verse 6 And you followed our example of life, which is also God's example, after you had received the word in great tribulation, yet accompanied also by the sense of joy which comes through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 7 Your reception of the gospel and earnest response to it was so complete that it made you an example to believers throughout Macedonia and Achaia.

Verse 8 For the word of the Lord (the Gospel) has gone forth through the report of your faith and conduct not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in all places the character of your faith toward God, i.e. the kind of faith you hold, which represents the kind we hold, has gone out so that we do not need to make explanation or speak any word in self defence of our conduct and teaching.

Verse 9 For they themselves now and then tell us or bring us tidings of what sort of coming to you and sojourning with you we had; and how you turned to God from the idols to obey and yield loyal service to Him, who lives and in every respect has the nature demanded of one who would be God.

Verse 10 And to wait with patience for His Son who is expected to return from Heaven, Whom God recalled to life from among the dead. This Son is Jesus who draws us to Himself and rescues us from condemnation in the approaching judgement.

ON THE TEXT OF I THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER ONE

Verse 1

Paul, Silvanus and Timothy,. . .The three apostles as fellow workers in this mission are included in the greeting and in subsequent passages in the epistle (e.g. "we" 2: 2,5,6,7; and "our" 2: 9), but they are not joint authors of it. It is Paul's letter. In Philippians and II Corinthians, Paul includes Timothy in the opening sentence while in I Corinthians he includes "our brother Sosthenes" and in Galatians, "all the brethren who are with me".

In other epistles Paul indicates the capacity under which he writes: "Apostle" in Romans, Ephesians, and Galatians or "servant of Christ Jesus" in Philippians. At this starting point in his work no one had challenged his apostleship and his special calling to be a servant of Christ for the cause of His kingdom. The Thessalonians knew Paul for what he had proved and continued indeed to be; thus making it unnecessary for him to add any qualifications to his name when he wrote to them.

Silvanus is the Latin form of Silas as he is called in the Book of Acts. Silas was a prophet inspired by God's spirit to speak in public and to predict future events (Acts 15: 32). He was a leading member, ἡγούμενος (hegoumenos), of the early church in Jerusalem and of Jewish parentage, but apparently he, like Paul, was also a Roman citizen (Acts 16: 38). He had been selected by the Jerusalem Council to convey to the converted Gentiles of Syrian Antioch, Syria and Cilicia the brotherly greetings and the decrees of the Council. Instead of returning to

Jerusalem, he stayed with his colleague, Judas (called Barsabbas), in Antioch for some time in order to confirm the brethren there (Acts 15: 22ff.).

During his second journey, he traveled in company with Paul through Syria, Cilicia, Lycaonia, Phrygia, Galatia, Troas (Acts 16: 1-8) and eventually crossed over to Macedonia with him for the preaching of the gospel on the European continent. Silas probably did not leave Corinth with Paul at the end of Paul's year and a half stay, as is suggested in Acts 18: 18, for Paul refers to Silas's evangelistic service in Corinth when he is writing his second letter to the Corinthians (II Cor. 1: 19). Paul's mention of Silas's work in II Cor. 1: 19 is the last mention of his name except for the Silvanus, *Σιλουανὸς* (Silouanos), the bearer from Rome of Peter's first epistle to the Christians of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who is mentioned in I Peter 5: 12 and who might be the same person.

Timothy was a half-breed Jew, a native of Lystra or Derbe (Acts 16: 1, 20: 4). His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, were pious Jewesses (II Tim. 1: 5) but his father was a Greek (Acts 16: 1), perhaps a synagogue Gentile, so that Timothy grew to manhood uncircumcised. He was converted to Christianity by Paul's ministry of the gospel (I Cor. 4: 17). As Timothy had had a good training in the Scriptures from his early childhood (II Tim. 3: 15), and a good reputation with the brethren of Derbe and Lystra, Paul wanted him to accompany him during his second missionary journey. Paul had him circumcised because some of the Jews knew that Timothy's father had been a Greek even though his father was most probably no longer living (Acts 16: 1). Timothy seems to have been frail of health (Tim. 5: 23)

and much younger than Paul and Silas who might have been in their late forties or early fifties. He was Paul's favorite associate (Phil. 2:22, 23) and was called "my beloved child" (II Tim. 1:1).

To the church of the Thessalonians. . .The word church or ἐκκλησία (ecclesia) was applied as early as the Homeric days to refer to the assemblies of citizens who were summoned together rather regularly for legislative purposes. In Athens the ecclesia made decrees and elected all officers not chosen by lot. In the Septuagint "ecclesia" is used for the assembly, usually for religious purposes, of the Israelites (Joshua 8:35). A Christian Church is basically and essentially an assembly of believers in Christ who gather together to worship God: a fellowship of Christians who hold their own religious gatherings and manage their own problems and affairs. It is an organized spiritual brotherhood in a definite city or village, thus composing a spiritual community whose sole authority and leader is Christ Himself. The word "ecclesia" is also used for the sum total of all the Christians all over the world who form the spiritual household of God regardless of place or race. The invisible, ideal Church Universal includes an infinite number of believers regardless of time past, present or future; this is the church of God eternal.

Paul uses the possessive genitive "of the Thessalonians", which places an emphasis on the people that compose the church in Thessaloniki, only in his two epistles to the Thessalonians. In other epistles he addresses himself "to the Saints in Christ at Philippi", "to all God's beloved in Rome", "to the Church of Christ which is at Corinth", or "To the Churches of Galatia".

in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:. . .The

unique revelation in Christianity is the Fatherhood of God revealed to us by Christ. His relationship to man is that of a loving and caring father who is to be loved and worshiped with joy in a filial communion. God wills to have the members of His spiritual household in the Spirit which His fatherly nature suggests or implies. This relationship is achieved in Jesus whom the Father ordained to be the Christ, and through whom we would come to understand this relationship with our heavenly Father. Creeds, teachings, ritual, moral codes, and forms of organization do not constitute a church, but a vital relationship that men can have in God, the Father, and the living Lord Jesus Christ does constitute a church. A church is a spiritual organism and not an organization. It is worth noticing also that the "in", ἐν (en), implies a unity or oneness of the believers with God and Jesus Christ.

Grace to you and peace. . . .This is a salutation used by Paul with different variations in all of his epistles. "Grace", χάρις (charis), from the Greek word χαίρω (chaero), to rejoice, denotes kindness, good will or favor and their effect on the mind and heart. "Peace" is the usual Jewish greeting, Shalom, which the Lord Himself used. God's loving kindness, χάρις (charis), is the basis of our salvation and our sense of security resulting in serenity and peace of mind and heart.

Verse 2

We give thanks to God always for you all, . . .Men are accustomed to thank God for things that are for their own use, but it is a higher level experience to rejoice and be thankful for other persons who have helped you to grow and to enrich your personality by offering

to you the opportunity to release your inner wealth and information. In the world of the spirit the law of increase is the law of sharing the best which one has. The spending of oneself for the good and salvation of others holds for us the secret of the deepest joy and satisfaction. Paul thanks God for the work of grace wrought in the lives of the Thessalonian Christians through his service in their midst. He feels the same gratitude in all the epistles which he wrote except to the Romans where his thankfulness is due, not to the work he had done in their midst, but due to their faith "proclaimed in all the world" (Romans 1 : 8). His thanksgiving is omitted entirely in the Epistle to the Galatians who had caused him much grief by forsaking the gospel which he had preached to them.

constantly mentioning you in our prayers, . . . "Constantly" or "always", ἀδιαλείπτως (adialeiptos), means with no break or recess. Prayer is a mystic experience of man's soul in communication with God. It is a very human and a very divine experience. We want to share God's blessings and the joy of His grace which we find in Him with those who are dear to us. The Thessalonians had endeared themselves to Paul and in his constant remembrance of them, he also gratefully remembers God's manifold grace that enriched their lives in Christ. He prays also that God's blessing will continue to enrich their lives.

Verse 3

remembering before our God and Father your work of faith . . .Vital faith arouses in one a genuine desire to do work of lasting value. A work of faith is, therefore, a conviction regarding Jesus Christ by which one changes

one's life and to which one gives expression in his conduct. The Thessalonians did not keep the blessing of their new faith to themselves but eagerly served the living and true God (I Thess. 1:9b) proving that their faith was a power which was revealed and crowned by effective and visible work.

and labor of love, . . .Love, ἀγάπη (agape), is always laborious, creative, adventurous and sacrificial. It knows no retreat in the presence of demanding and difficult situations. Paul evaluates the Thessalonians' labor for the promotion of the gospel of Christ in the same manner as he evaluates his own work in their midst, "our labor and toil" (I Thess. 2:9). This labor of love and toil is putting oneself affectionately to work and trouble for the eternal welfare or salvation of others. Not all of church activityism fulfills this definition today.

and steadfastness of hope . . .Paul uses this expression to show the patience, endurance, ὑπομονῆς (hypomonis), or holding out which was necessary in their work. Their work of faith had a twofold aim, first, to secure the best form of life for a human creature on earth, and secondly, to achieve an eternal life in Christ Jesus. With these aims to be achieved there was much testing of their faith. The Thessalonians had all the endurance that such a hope would inspire in them. The context and tone of I Thessalonians 5:10 reminds us of the words of Jesus, "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Mat. 10:22).

in our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .This last phrase should read "of our Lord Jesus Christ". It may be either a subjective genitive meaning hope inspired by Christ or an objective genitive which would mean the hope we have about Christ and what he will fulfill for us.

Verse 4

For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you; . . .If this rendering of the text were correct, we might think that since grace is a gift, it implies that the giver reserves the right to choose the receiver, who, in no case, can claim it on the ground of his own merits. The Scriptures make no differentiation between the states of men, they have "all sinned" (Romans 3: 23) and any concession of God to men is out of His infinite goodness, love and grace. Would then His choice be arbitrary? If a man's merits have no bearing on the decision of God, what influences God's choice? God's nature of love excludes any caprice or arbitrariness and we know that He is not respectful of persons (Acts 10: 34, Rom. 2: 11). If God chooses some unto salvation and others perdition, God's attributes of righteousness and justice would seem to suffer inherently. There must be a real moral basis for this choice, based on the character and attributes of God and giving moral responsibility to man for his own actions and salvation. God is not only omnipotent, we remember, but also omniscient. God's election, therefore, of certain individuals to accept His grace is due wholly to His omniscience and not to His arbitrary choice of some men to be blessed and others damned. God is able in His perfect infinite knowledge to know beforehand how an individual man will respond to his responsibility of choice and to the chance of life which is presented to him (Parable of the Talents). This rendering does not, however, truly correspond to the original text.

A closer examination of the Greek text of Verse 4 reveals that "loved", ἠγαπημένοι (igapimeni), has as its subject "by God", ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ (hypo tou Theou),

and that *τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν* (Tin eclogin hymon) means literally "your own choice" and does not have the same subject, namely "by God"; but the genitive "your", *ὑμῶν* (hymon), is the subject of choosing. In this rendering Paul does not speak as if God has elected or chosen them, but as if man must decide what to do with his chance of life and that God has, at any rate, a forehand knowledge of this decision. Paul knew that the Thessalonians had been using their chance of life and therefore that they had made a happy and effective choice. The verse should read, "for we know brethren, beloved by God, your deliberate choice", that is the choice you made [cf. II Thess. 2: 13 where the former idea is conveyed e.g. chosen by God *ὅτι εἵλατο ὑμᾶς ὁ Θεὸς* (oti eilato hymas ho Theos)].

Verse 5

for our gospel . . .This is not in the sense that the gospel which they preached had originated in their mind and heart, but that they were the media by which the gospel reached other people.

came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction, . . .The message was communicated to them by means of the spoken word. Christian teaching is not, however, a theory or a philosophic system explored by a dialectical method worked out by a human mind. Although it is a teaching appealing to human logic and although every aspect, element and idea fits together into a sound consistently built up doctrine which forms an integral body of uttered truth, it is also a teaching which presented itself "in power" creating unshakable convictions of a life that could not be checked or rendered void by malice or

violent reaction in the world. The gospel is a teaching which strengthens the heart and the mind to stand fast on what has been disclosed by God. This conviction has nothing to do with fanaticism which is an emotion existing without clear understanding. This teaching is a power, an inner urge and feeling which is directed toward religious ideals and which is intelligent and reasoned. In its essence it is the work of the Holy Spirit which illumines the minds and hearts with ample and sound "information" and which creates a conviction that can stand all testings.

*You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. . . .*The editor of the Revised Standard Version, confronted with some difficulty of the text, changed the punctuation in the last clause of Verse 5 and rendered it unrelated to the preceding part of the verse. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they have seen these very same apostles endowed with this power of the Gospel which is now also theirs.

Verse 6

*And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, . . .*Any effective teaching results in a new kind of life. Demosthenes, the great Athenian orator, said that he who asserts that he has learned something knows nothing if he is not able to demonstrate it in a practical way. The chance of life that was offered to the Thessalonians could lead them to become Christ-like. The apostles had set the example for them, and before the apostles, the Lord Himself had set the example for all to follow. The Thessalonians followed their example and received the word with much affection and joy of the Holy Spirit abounding in their hearts.

for you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit; . . .The Thessalonians had not chosen the easy way. Affliction and sorrow, which are usually detrimental to the human spirit, followed their choice (Acts 17: 3-9, I Thess. 2: 14). In the case of a genuine Christian experience, however, sorrow is blended in an amazing way with an inner joy which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5: 22). Such was Christ's own counsel (Mat. 5: 11, 12). There seems to be some analogy between the cost one pays to be a Christian and the inner joy and happiness which one finds. Paul speaks eloquently about the Christian experience when speaking about bearing the remnants of Christ's afflictions (Col. 1: 24). Christ was given to us not only that we might believe in Him but also that we might suffer on His behalf (Phil. 1: 29).

Verse 7

so that you became an example to all the believers . . .They are not only a model or pattern of believing, but a living example for all the believers to follow (I Tim. 4: 12). The unconscious influence upon others as we live up to our Christian ideals is often more effective than a delivered sermon. The most eloquent speech that all can easily understand and that can encourage others to put their own beliefs into practice is the quality of life we live. By living daily the fundamental truths of the gospel and by embodying in our everyday experience the highest values that abound in Christ, we can inspire young and old to try to achieve the same quality and kind of life which are found in Him.

in Macedonia . . .Macedonia in New Testament times,

which included the present Macedonia, Thessaly, a district of Thrace, and a large section along the Adriatic coast, was under a Roman Proconsul whose capital was in Thessaloniki.

and Achaia. . . .In the New Testament time Achaia was a Roman province including the whole Peloponessus, most of Hellas proper and the islands. This province together with Macedonia comprised all of Greece (Acts 18: 12, 19: 21). The name was given by the Romans when they took Corinth and destroyed the Achaian League in 146 B. C.

Verse 8

For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. . . .Thessaloniki was not only the capital of an extensive Roman Province, it was also a mercantile center on the Egnatia Road to which merchants and other travellers came from all parts of the Roman Empire. These people were quick news carriers. The newly founded churches might in this way have pursued some kind of Christian fellowship and communication. There had already been some contact with the church at Philippi which had sent some financial support to Paul while he was still in Thessaloniki, and there were other Christians in Beroea and Athens. All of these churches could perhaps have communicated the good news of the progress of the gospel in the capital city of Thessaloniki. This communication seems to be an essential element of the spirit of unity in the bond of Christian love. The promotion of the kingdom of God

on earth is not the business of one Jew but of all the believers in Him. The readiness of the Thessalonian believers to become heralds of the gospel by setting an example of life sounded forth "everywhere", which is a phraseological exaggeration meaning "widely" (cf. Rom. 1 : 8, I Cor. 1 : 2, Col. 1 : 6). Their sure faith was a clear admonition and encouragement to others so that the apostles did not need to speak about them to the other churches.

Verse 9

*For they themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, . . .*In the original text this reads, "what sort of coming to you", *ὁποίαν εἴσοδον* (hopian eisodon). In order to stimulate a similar zeal in others, the Apostles would tell of the faith of the Thessalonians, but the fame which the Thessalonians had acquired spread even before the Apostles could carry the word. Others told the Apostles of their visit to Thessaloniki, of the dangers and afflictions which had awaited them and of their unchanging attitude regardless of their afflictions (cf. Acts 17 : 2-9).

They told the Apostles how the Thessalonians had "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God". In writing this to the Thessalonians Paul does not say "from idols to God" which would be the chronological and actual way, but phrases it in a more delicate way. The sting of any painful remembrance vanishes when the good, happy and blessed occupies immediately the whole focus of attention. In dealing with human sensitivity and feeling it is always better to create a happier

atmosphere by presenting the positive and good first rather than the negative and painful. To the converted Jews in the newly established church in Thessaloniki, Paul's phrasing would have no meaning but to the others, though they had some monotheistic notions, the exact meaning of the statement would be clear. In any case they all had "turned" to serve a living and true God. The word "turned" indicates the idea that they were potentially and actually with God, but that they had gone astray and now were invited back to Him so that both those who had come from paganism and those from Judaism might serve in loyal obedience a living God.

The Jews had a clear-cut monotheism but their conception of Jehovah had not always been clear and lofty. Two factors must be remembered in the process of God's revelation of Himself throughout the course of Old Testament history: first, the desire and consent of God to reveal Himself in loving kindness, beauty of character and holiness, and secondly, the ability of Israel to accept and understand this revelation. These are two distinct tendencies: that of God revealing Himself and that of man trying to know and understand Him. The human attributes which made Jehovah a small tribal God of one particular nation were replaced centuries later by attributes making a God of all nations who was wholly unlike man in any respect, but who was still shrouded in a "veil". Christ revealed God in His perfect revelation as not only the one living God but as the God whose true nature was that of a loving and gracious father, the source of life and the source of eternal value. Worship is the primary service that Christians should offer to Him. Their obedience and willingness to be co-workers in the establishment of His kingdom on earth by accepting

and committing themselves to His will revealed in the Messiah whom He had sent among men to spread His word is the second proof of man's devotion.

Verse 10

and to wait his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. . . .The Thessalonians rendered their devotion to Him by serving Him and by maintaining their hopeful expectation, waiting. The composite *ἀναμένειν* (anamenein) refers to Him who has departed and is expected to come again. "From heaven" gives us an idea of the direction of the coming. The earth was thought to be flat and heaven was placed above.

whom he raised from the dead . . .The great argument running through the early chapters of Acts is that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jewish leaders caused to be crucified, was in reality God's Messiah (Acts 2: 36; 3: 20, 4: 10, 5: 30-31, 42, 9: 15, 17, 20, 22, 10: 38-43,. 17: 3). One evidence that God had made Jesus His Messiah was His resurrection from the dead (Acts 2: 32, 3: 5, 4: 10, 33, 5: 20). The reason for the antagonism of the Jewish leaders was their guilty fears that His followers would bring the fact clearly before the Jewish people that the Messiah whom all Israel had been looking for had finally and actually come. The leaders of the nation not only failed to recognize Him but they had Him killed (Acts 5: 28, 7: 52, 53). The whole Christian teaching is centered on His resurrection. "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (I Cor. 15: 14).

We learn that there is an inescapable judgment for

all, but that Jesus, who draws us to Himself, rescues us from condemnation in this approaching judgment. It is not only sure "to come", says Paul, but it is coming ἐρχομένης (erchomenis), being on the way. He rescues us by imparting His holy and incorruptible life to us. This truth about God's Messiah concerned not only the Jewish people but all nations for He was to be the Savior of the whole world.

PARAPHRASE OF I THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER TWO

Verse 1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our mission to you did not prove a failure but really helped many of you to a new vision of
Verse 2 life in which you became partakers. In spite of the fact that we suffered fearfully just before coming to you and were outrageously treated at Philippi, as you know, we came to have great assurance, born from a profound sense of reliance upon our God, in a great contest with dangers and obstacles in our earnest desire to advance the gospel in your midst.
Verse 3 For our message or sermon to you was not from a mental straying in wrong opinion regarding morals and religion, neither was it out of impure motives or from lustful desires, nor yet from baited craftiness intended to
Verse 4 deceive you; but as we have been examined by God to see whether we were genuinely capable and worthy to be trusted with the preaching of the gospel, so we speak. Our endeavor was not to accommodate ourselves to the opinions of men in the hope of pleasing them, but to please God who examines our
Verse 5 hearts. We never appeared using flattering discourse to persuade you insincerely, as you know; neither did we appear with a pretended cause in the hope of making any gain from
Verse 6 you, to this God is witness. We did not endeavor

to seek the good opinions of men, neither yours nor in other places where we have
Verse 7 preached, but we became gentle and kind with
Verse 8 lowly hearts just as a mother fosters with tender care her own children, and so being attached to you we yearned after you and were gladly ready to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our very selves, or souls, because you had become very dear to us.
Verse 9 For you remember, brethren, our toil and distress: day and night we worked in order that we might not put a load on any of you; and so proclaimed to you the gospel of God with a gravity and authority which must be
Verse 10 listened to and obeyed. You are our witnesses, as is God also, that we conducted ourselves toward you who believe with much devotion and piousness and with justice and proved
Verse 11 ourselves blameless in every respect. Because you know how we felt toward each one of you, as a father toward his own children exhorting,
Verse 12 encouraging and beseeching you that you regulate your lives in a manner worthy of God Who called you to His own kingdom and glory.
Verse 13 And we are giving thanks to God continually on this account also; that when you had received from us the word of God, which we spoke, you accepted not the spoken words of men, but as it really is the word of God. And it is making a difference in the lives of you
Verse 14 who have believed it. There is the added evidence also that it was the true message of God; because you, brethren, began to be exact

followers of those who had accepted the same message back in Judea; for you also suffered the same sort of treatment from your countrymen which they suffered at the hands of
Verse 15 their fellow countrymen, the Jews. For there the Jews not only killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, but also drove us out and do not please God. They act contrary to all
Verse 16 men in that they prohibit us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they might be saved. And the result is what it has always been through their long history of prophet-persecution, they are completing their course in sin, but the judgment of God is placed upon them eventually for the termination of their conduct.

Verse 17 But brethren although we are bereaved of you because we were separated from you for a short time, yet we are not really so because this separation is only bodily while our hearts are bound together with the love and faith and vision of life we share with you. But even so, because there was the intense sense of grief of separation, we have tried earnestly to see you, and there was a deep longing in back of our effort prompting us, because we should like to
Verse 18 have come. Personally I willed and thought of attempting it repeatedly, but Satan impeded
Verse 19 my course by cutting off the way. For really, though we may be accused of having had many other motives in coming to you (Verses 3–6) what is our hope and our joy and the real cause for a sense of dignity and honor in this

work? Is it not you yourselves, as you will stand up before our Lord Jesus when He comes?

Verse 20 Yes, you are our glory and our joy.

ON THE TEXT OF I THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER TWO

Verse 1

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our visit to you was not in vain, . . . The visit of the apostles in Thessaloniki had been successful; a considerable number of Jews and Greeks had been helped to a vision and experience of a new kind of life (Acts 17: 4). Paul, however, was disturbed that his labor might have been without result or literally empty, κενὴ (keni), or in vain. This same concern does not seem to be expressed by any other New Testament writer, but is rather quite characteristic of Paul (cf. I Cor. 15: 2, 10, 58, II Cor. 6: 1, 9:3, Gal. 2: 2, 3: 4). It does not seem to come from a spirit of egotism, but rather from a genuine consideration for the welfare of those for whom he labored. Paul's joy and peace of mind was to be able to see men partake of the opportunities in the life that Christ offered, and the culmination of his joy and serenity was the assurance that the believers themselves had taken up this new life.

Verse 2

but though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage to continue preaching the gospel despite the great opposition. . . .(cf. Acts 16: 19ff.) The Thessalonians were informed not only about the context of God's word and His will, but also about all that might happen to a Christian. They were told how the apostles had suffered from insult and imprisonment in Philippi, ὑβρισθέντες (hyvristhentes),

and yet the Thessalonians saw how the apostles had courage in God. If the apostles had not been earnest men, they would never have attempted to preach the gospel again after their experience in Philippi. "In our God" means that they became courageous to preach because of their communion with God, their foundation in, ἐν (en), God. The ever renewed dependence on God endows the human heart with a real strength so that bitter experiences, like those in Philippi, do not paralyze His servants or make them withdraw from their demanding tasks. The heart that rests on God never faints and never chooses to retreat from its work. All difficulties and obstacles set before it are turned into stepping stones to a greater understanding; every shaking of our life makes our roots penetrate deeper into His loving heart and increases our steadfastness in faith and character.

"The gospel of God" may mean the revealed good news about God's nature and character, or the special message that God loves man and has sent His only begotten Son that man may be saved in and through Him. Paul preached to the Thessalonians that God is living and true (I Thess. 1 : 9) and wrathful against sin (I Thess. 1 : 10). Secondly, he told them that Jesus, Who is God's Son and Who delivers sinners (I Thess. 1 : 10), will come again. Thirdly, he preached that the Messiah was not to be a royal person, who conquers by force as popular Jewish expectation taught, but was to win through suffering and service. This Messiah was to die and rise triumphant over death. Fourthly, Paul showed that the life and experience of Jesus of Nazareth was, therefore, that of the hoped for Messiah (Acts 17 : 3, 7) and the proof for this conclusion was that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Lastly he preached that

believing in Him, or the acceptance of God's offered grace, is the way to salvation for all men (Acts 16: 31).

Verse 3

*For our appeal . . .*An appeal, παράκλησις (paraclesis), is not a mere address to the feelings, but an exhortation and counsel to do what is right. The Christian message can never be enforced. It is presented in the spirit of loving admonition which is addressed to the mind and heart, to the whole personality of man. God's word had always been an appeal to man's reasoning and conscience. In spite of man's slow spiritual growth, the high and exalted truths about God and His will have been presented throughout the Bible in ways that respect man's ability of reasoning, judgment and free choice. The prophetic vision in the Old Testament presents to man's choice and sense of integrity the life which is best for him (Isaiah 6: 18-20, Deut. 30: 19, Micah 6: 8). One of the most touching moments in the life of Jesus is His lamentation over Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered your children together. . .and you would not" (Luke 13: 34). Christianity can neither be enforced nor can it be handed down by heredity. One must freely choose the way of life which follows the footsteps of the Master and grows into the experience of His life.

*does not spring from error . . .*The message which Paul preached so ardently was not from a mental straying into wrong opinion but was a teaching that the Lord Himself willed him to proclaim after His encounter with Paul on the road to Damascus. It was the word of God's revelation to him, and it was the truth that the Scriptures recorded concerning God's Messiah (Acts 17: 3). None of his Jewish persecutors would have

dared to say that the Scriptures which Paul used were erroneous.

or uncleanness, . . . The word ἀκαθαρσίας (akatharsias) is not used in its ceremonial sense of the Old Testament, but in an ethical or moral sense. There was nothing unwholesome in the conduct of the apostles, as all their behavior had been clean, wholesome and pleasing to God. *nor is it made with guile*; . . Nor was Paul cunningly intending to deceive the Thessalonians. Although it is not stated that rumors were circulating in Thessaloniki against Paul, it is unlikely that Paul would have mentioned such negative and disgraceful characteristics of himself and his work if he had not been answering such rumors. Timothy must have spoken to him about such rumors, for the following passages in the epistle presume the existence of such slanders. As the preliminary remarks about the epistle pointed out, there were many who were opposed to Paul.

Verse 4

but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts. . . .More literally this passage should read, "Just as we have been tested and approved". . .Some commentators, e.g. John Chrysostom, reject the idea of being tested and approved by God, presumably on the ground that the omniscience of God does not need to scrutinize any person to know whether he is capable of carrying the gospel. This testing or scrutinizing is, however, meant only to make us fit for the work He wants us to do. The parable of the talents (Mth. 25: 14ff) has a bearing on the exact literal rendering of this verse. One's own capability and worthi-

ness is analogous to the experience one acquires in actual practice and work. The talents are given "to each one according to his ability" (Mth. 25: 15). After each has worked with what is given to him, he becomes fit to handle more of the talents, that is, more opportunities in life and service. This is true in all fields of knowledge and walks of life. The Christian ministry is not a profession but a calling to God Who is willing to lead us to greater joy of fruition as we prove ourselves worthy of it in our daily tasks.

Paul continued to spread the gospel having in mind "not to please men" but to be loyal to God by making known His will to men. He did a wonderful mission work in Asia and then had the opportunity to spread the gospel to a wider world, to all the nations of Europe. He did not soothe the consciences of his listeners but awakened them to their own inescapable responsibility to harmonize their wills with that of their Creator, thus Paul pleased God as a true messenger and co-worker in the promotion of His kingdom on earth.

Verses 5 and 6

For we never used either words of flattery, as you know, or a cloak for greed, as God is witness; nor did we seek glory of men, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. . . .Again Paul defends the apostles against the spreading of vicious rumors. Their enemies called them deluded fanatics who were holding unclean gatherings, or tricky men trying to induce the simpleminded men and women by the pretense of religion and pleasing speeches to make large gifts of money to them (I Thess. 2: 3). They had also been charged with promoting a cause insincerely,

ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας (en logo kolakeias), for reason of flattery, or pursuing personal gain, *προφάσει πλεονεξίας* (prophasei pleonexias), and of trying to get into the good standing in the community, *ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξα* (ex anthropon doxa). Paul's apology does not indicate that there were necessarily a considerable number who believed these charges but he does, however, mention and briefly refute each of them. The Thessalonians knew the truth about these charges and God Himself who was a witness to their mission, had approved it by rendering it effective by His blessing. The exact meaning of *προφάσει* (prophasei) is "in pretence" rendered, however, in this version as "cloak".

Verse 7

*But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. . . .*Some manuscripts read "babes", *νήπιοι* (nepioi). *ἤπιοι* (epioi), gentle, needs the quality of maturity and the quality of kindness to endure with sweetness experiences which would make others lose their temper and poise. It is the meek and gentle spirit which knows how to face evil with goodness and hatred with profound love, to meet malice with charity and enmity with a friendly smile. It is the undefiable strength of the human spirit which can conquer the hardest bulwarks of the human heart, and the warmth that can melt ice cold feelings. It is a shock absorber which paves the way for hearts to meet so that no words with piercing hardness are left. In the sweetness by which the hard gaze is met, the mighty barrier of division is removed. This gentleness is the power that helps one to ride life rather than be ridden and worn out by it. Jesus said,

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth", and the Apostle was just that.

The word *νήπιοι* (nepioi) used by other ancient authorities reminds us again of the words of the Master, "unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mth. 18 : 3). Children are weak and full of needs in life which cause them to develop a deep sense of trust and dependence. Their minds are simple and unable to seek vain glory or develop motives and desires at the expense of others. Children are ready to cry easily but also to smile. They are impotent to cause pain or sorrow to others out of malice, evil intention, or selfish ends. They are always ready to learn and grow with no sign of pride. With ineffable sweetness the apostles entrusted themselves to the Thessalonians, becoming like little children among them. Either *ἤπιοι* (epioi), gentle, or *νήπιοι* (nepioi), babes, describes the apostles; they were the kind of people God wanted them to be in order that they might be Christlike and follow His way of life. If we were to choose one of these readings we would prefer the first "gentle" for it fits better with the following text, "like a nurse taking care of her children". The word *τροφὸς* (trophos), nurse, actually means "a feeder" and since it says that she fosters with love, *θάλπῃ* (thalpee), her own children it is definitely a mother and not a nurse. The Thessalonians were Paul's children and he meant to do what was best for them, not counting for himself any cost or painful effort.

Verse 8

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our

own selves, because you had become very dear to us. . . . The words "affectionately desirous of you" also translate as, "we are fastened to you", or "bound to you". It is worthwhile to notice that the word rendered "ourselves" is translated from ἑαυτῶν ψυχὰς (heauton psychas) which literally would be "our own souls". Limitless love takes no account of pain or cost and makes one give the best one has for the good of him who has provoked such love. In this verse there is much sentiment relevant to the nature of the mother mentioned in the preceding verse. Many intellectuals try to rob man of such feelings and render his life empty of the tenderness which makes it human. The difference between a mother who feeds her child with a tender love and a steward who serves a meal is a quality of life that none should dare to miss. The apostles were ready to share with the Thessalonians their real and best selves, their souls.

Verse 9

For you remember our labor and toil, brethren; we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you, while we preached to you the gospel of God. . . . Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18 : 3) and he worked his trade in order to earn the money for his own living. This does not mean that he did not believe that those who minister the word should not live out of their ministry (cf. Luke 10 : 7, I Tim. 5 : 18). In his particular case his trade was an important asset for, when his enemies charged him of selfish aims or of preaching the gospel in order to earn a living rather than because of a calling, he had his proof in his trade. He asked for nothing for preaching the gospel of God. "Labor "or κόπος (kopos) means toil and trouble, suffering, weariness, fatigue, while πόνος

(ponos) would be merely work. "Toil" or μόχθος (mohthos) from μοχθέω (mohtheo) means to be worn out with toil, to be sorely distressed.

Verse 10

You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our behavior to you believers; . . . The Thessalonians knew, beyond a doubt, how devout, ὁσίως (hosios), not holy as it is in the text, the conduct of the apostles had been, how just their dealings and how blameless they were in all things both those related to God and those related to men, and thus they knew how undeserving they were of any censure. Through the real communion with God, which made the Thessalonians aware of God's will in their own lives and the way of life in Christ, the Thessalonians knew that God and His spirit in them verified the behavior and message which Paul and his colleagues brought. The Thessalonians were the result of the apostles' work in their midst. It was God's own work which could not have succeeded if He had not approved of it. This the Thessalonians knew well deep in their hearts. This was indeed the best and most effective way in which Paul could have defended himself against any false rumors.

Verses 11 and 12

*for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. . . .*The bonds created between Paul and the Thessalonian brethren were of the highest form known to human experience, namely those between a father and his children. They knew how Paul had

exhorted them, or invited them, παρακαλοῦντες (parakalountes), with a strong appeal to their wills, how he had encouraged or consoled, παραμυθούμενοι (paramythoumenoi), and comforted them so that they could find joy, and how he had charged, μαρτυρόμενοι (martyromenoi), invoked with all his inner force, them that they might be Christlike and regulate their lives in a manner worthy of God Who had called them to His own kingdom and glory.

Verse 13

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. . . .Because the Thessalonians accepted the message as it really was, as the word of God, the apostles' hearts were filled with joy and gratitude. The Thessalonians did not confuse the apostles and their preaching with the many other orators and lecturers who travelled along the Egnatia Road. The apostolic message was "at work" in the lives of the believers; it activated its own peculiar power which was evident in their new way of life. They had "received" it, παραλαβόντες (paralavontes), meaning they trusted and committed themselves to it and "accepted it", ἐδέξασθε (edexasthe), by outwardly professing that it was indeed the word of God. Believing is not merely a mental appreciation or acceptance of a presented truth, it is an entrustment of the whole personality without reservation to a whole new life experience which is the result of such surrender.

Verse 14

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches

*of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea; for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, . . .*The evidence that it was indeed the word of God was that the Thessalonians became imitators of the Christian churches in Judea, and that the change wrought in them provoked the same reactions and persecutions from their countrymen, *συμφυλετῶν* (symphyleton), that had also happened in Judea. The genitive "of God" is primarily objective, but it is also subjective for each church is for God in that it belongs to Him and witnesses for Him. No one can make a church other than that which God brings into existence; people may make organizational units, or political structures, but not a church. The church is God's creation in Jesus Christ and stands in His presence for His will and cause.

Verse 15

*who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all men . . .*Paul's basic charge against the leaders of Judaism is that they were unable to recognize the Messiah and led Him to be crucified. These leaders also killed the prophets (cf. Mth. 23 : 30, Lk. 13 : 34, Acts 7 : 52, Jer. 26 : 15), and drove Paul from Asia (cf. Acts 9 : 28-30, 21 : 21-22). These acts of violence against the leaders of Christianity surely displeased God and opposed men (cf. Acts 14 : 9, 19, 17 : 5, 18 : 12).

Verse 16

by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last! . . . Some

ancient authorities omit "God's". Although Paul says the sins of the Jewish nation have accumulated to their full measure and that God's wrath will come upon them "at last", εἰς τέλος (eis telos), or to finish or end, he does not apparently mean that this is the end of their destiny. In Romans 11 Paul suggests that theirs is but a temporary falling away and that they will later be restored.

What is a sin? Originally it meant missing the mark in hunting, but generally it came to mean a failure of one's purpose, or a going wrong. To do wrong, to err, or to commit a fault to someone is generally considered to sin. In philosophy and religion sin has the meaning of guilt. In the Bible, however, it is an offense or a violation of thought or deed which is against God's law or nature or will.

Verse 17

*But since we were bereft of you, brethren, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face; . . .*Although the Thessalonians were lost to him in sight, Paul rejoiced in feeling their hearts close to his own and yearned to see them again in person.

Verse 18

because we wanted to come to you—I, *Paul, again and again . . .*The text says, ἅπαξ καὶ δὶς (hapax kai this), once or twice. As an idiomatic expression this may mean repeatedly. Some scholars think that Paul made two attempts to go to Thessaloniki, one while in Beroea and one while he was in Athens before it was decided that Timothy should go. The ἐσπουδάσαμεν (espoutha-

samen), "endeavored", of the preceding verse indicates his serious intentions to go back to Thessaloniki.

but Satan hindered us. . . .Paul was probably trying to answer the charges that although he stayed in Thessaloniki long enough to cause changes in the Thessalonians and cause their suffering, he fled and never returned to help them. He indicates that various things came to stop him and thus he was never able to make the visit to them which he himself strongly desired.

The fundamental question of whether moral responsibility can be divided is raised by the verse. Either man is responsible for his evil deeds or else Satan is. Nowhere does Jesus show that moral responsibility can be evaded (Mth. 25 : 31-46). The moral universe cannot, therefore, be divided. Jesus is exceedingly definite about the source of evil saying, "What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man" (Mk. 7 : 20-23). From this, however, it must not be positively asserted that there is no objective personal power of evil. There are grounds which lead one to believe that there may be such a power. Jesus took a positive attitude on the matter. He is unique in revealing the moral, ethical and spiritual realm (Mth. 5: 7) for His place in the spirit world is unique (Mk. 1 : 22f, Mth. 11 : 2-7, 21 : 23-27, John 5 : 26-27) and He could transmit to others from His own power and authority (Lk. 9 : 1). What then shall we say about Him who spoke so definitely about an agency of the evil power whom He calls "Satan"? Either He was honest throughout His discourses and sayings, or He did not have the authority which He

claimed to have in the spirit realm. If He did not have this authority, then the ground on which we accept Him as the Truth and the Light and the Lord of the world would be shaken.

The possibility of a supreme personality of evil presents the essential difficulty of a duality opposed to the unity in life and the universe. This difficulty arises basically from the notion that this is a "supreme personality", a notion which need not be so. From our experience of evil in our own lives and observations, we can see that a supreme personality of evil does not account for the evil we see. It is not the devil but rather a combination of evil minded men that do the devilish things called sin which we observe. Whether we posit a supreme personality of evil or not makes no difference in who is responsible. Deeds of evil are always connected with persons who permit them and who are therefore responsible for them. The fact of an evil personality in the universe cannot, however, be completely forgotten. The accumulation of evil is an ever mounting reality and these moral realities *do have influence.* Is this reality of evil as in Mark 5 accounted for in terms of that which appears to be beyond our power to control, or is there a kind of devil responsible for such cases? We shall probably never know the answers to such questions until we arrive in the realm of the fullness of light, but there are many indications that suggest that there may be an evil personality although not a supreme one.

Verses 19 and 20

For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy. . . .All of Paul's pent-up feelings of

affection are expressed here. Picture Paul presenting his personally won Thessalonian converts to the Lord. What disappointment there would be if they should fail to be present on that day. Would there be left any joy or glory or crown with their places vacant? Paul is totally absorbed in the lives and welfare of the Thessalonians and is filled with an ineffable joy and happiness for what is yet to come.

PARAPHRASE OF I THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER THREE

Verse 1 So then, because we wished so earnestly to see you, when we could wait no longer for a possible opportunity to come ourselves we thought it good to be left at Athens alone,
Verse 2 and so we sent Timothy, who is our brother and minister of God, or our co-worker of God in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen or
Verse 3 support and encourage you in your faith, that no one of you be shaken in his convictions by these oppressions or afflictions for you yourselves know that we are bound to have such
Verse 4 experiences. Because, indeed, when we were with you, we warned you that we would have to face oppressions as it has come about and
Verse 5 as you have witnessed. Therefore, when I could not bear waiting any longer for an opportunity to come myself, I sent that I might know your welfare, being concerned that these distressing oppressions of the adversary might have slanted you and our efforts should prove futile.
Verse 6 But just now, when Timothy came to us directly from you, and brought us the good report of your steady loyalty to your faith and of your love and that (you have not been influenced by the rumors about us but) you remember us truly and kindly always, making the strongest and most earnest desire to see

Verse 7 us again as we wish to see you; we were comfort-
ed, brethren, concerning you because of your
faith, for we have been experiencing all sorts
Verse 8 of grief and distress; but we can live once
more now that we know that you are remaining
faithful to the Lord and so can continue our
Verse 9 race in the mission to which we were called.
How can we thank God enough for you and
for the pure joy and relief and success on
Verse 10 your account before God! Night and day we
pray that we may see you once more and may
bring you more perfectly into possession of
any points that may be lacking in your under-
standing of the faith.

Verse 11 So may God our Father Himself and our
Lord Jesus remove the hindrances in the way
and lead us to you, and may He help increase
Verse 12 and furnish you abundantly with love for
each other and for all men, just as we have
Verse 13 for you, in order to make you steadfast and to
strengthen your hearts, free from fault in moral
purity and power before our God and Father
at the time when our Lord Jesus comes in
company with all His holy ones.

ON THE TEXT OF I THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER THREE

Verse 1

Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, . . .Paul was in a great agony over the circumstances created after his departure from Thessaloniki and Beroea. The news which probably reached him in Athens raised a turmoil in his heart. Would the new converts have the strength to face the trying situations which were before them? His past experience with persecutions would help him visualize a picture of suffering and hardship which was indeed discouraging. His heart was inflamed with the desire to see the Thessalonians for he could not rid his mind of the question of whether or not his labor had been in vain. Would the Thessalonians be moved from the faith or would they stand fast in spite of the afflictions which they would have to face?

Verse 2

and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's servant in the gospel of Christ, to establish you in your faith and to exhort you, . . .Since his great desire to go himself could not be realized, Paul was willing to send Timothy. Note that the word "alone" in the previous verse indicates how much Timothy was esteemed and cherished by Paul. He must have left a great vacancy in Paul's life while he was away in Thessaloniki. Because of Timothy's youth, it is quite possible that the Thessalonians did not consider him an important member of the apostolic

team or an active servant of God and hence did not give him much attention. They might have thought of him as just an aid or helper to Paul, or even just as an errand boy, but Paul takes real pains in introducing him to them with the words, "our brother and God's servant in the gospel of Christ". Paul acknowledged in him all the ability and strength to do in their midst what he was commissioned to do. Apparently Timothy needed this recognition and moral support in order to be able to achieve the aim of his task.

Timothy and Silas had remained in Beroea when Paul fled to Athens but there is no information indicating that Timothy had fled from Thessaloniki to Beroea with them. The security which the brethren gave had been only for Paul and Silas. Timothy might then have joined them later in Beroea. He might even have been left behind in Philippi because he is not mentioned with Paul and Silas when they were carrying on their discourses in the synagogue and their missionary work in Thessaloniki (Acts 17 : 4). If he did actually go with them to Thessaloniki, he might have been sent back to Philippi while Paul and Silas remained to labor in Thessaloniki. Because of the Philippian's interest in Paul's preaching in Thessaloniki and their own church organization during this time, it would not have been strange if Timothy had been commissioned to return to Philippi and to meet Paul and Silas again only in Beroea. This again might explain why, while Paul and Silas were forbidden to go back to Thessaloniki, Timothy was able to visit the city without prohibition.

Timothy's mission was not an easy one; it needed much skill and spiritual maturity. His age might lessen the suspicions of the opponents, but would it hinder

his ministry to the elderly people of special responsibility? We do not know the answers to these questions, but Paul speaks here showing his trust and confidence in Timothy by calling him "our brother", *ἀδελφόν ἡμῶν* (adelphon hemon), denoting the closest spiritual kinship, "and God's servant", *διάκονον τοῦ Θεοῦ* (deaconon tou Theou), which originally meant a menial, domestic servant or waiter but also meant a deacon or messenger in the church (I Tim. 3 : 8ff), *διάκονος* (deaconos) is derived from *δια* (dia) and *κόνις* (konis), one who is covered with dust from running on the road as a dispatch messenger. The best manuscripts which are more authentic read "God's co-worker" or "fellow worker", *συνεργὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ* (synergon tou Theou), instead of "God's servant". They also read *συνεργὸν ἡμῶν* (synergon hemon) which is "our co-worker". Both scripts convey, however, the meaning which Paul is trying to describe.

in the gospel of Christ. . .Here the objective genitive is used, the good news about Christ, but it may be subjective genitive, meaning the gospel that Christ has given us to broadcast to the world. "To establish", *στηρίξαι* (stirixae), means to set you fast, to support you in the shaking of tribulation. "And to exhort you", *παρακαλέσαι* (paracalesae), is to call you, to cheer you, to console and comfort you. "In your faith", *περὶ τῆς πίστεως ὑμων* (peri tis pisteos hymon), means literally for your faith. Other authorities have *ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως* (hyper tis pisteos), which means "for the sake of your faith".

Verse 3

that no one be moved by these afflictions. You yourselves know that this is to be our lot. . . *σαίνεσθαι* (saenesthae)

was originally used in reference to the wagging of a dog's tail, but means also to be shaken, to be disturbed and faint in heart, or to be driven in tumult or confusion. "By these afflictions" literally means in these afflictions. "You yourselves know that this is to be our lot", εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα (eis touto keimetha), means that we are assigned or appointed to this or that place. There is no notion of chance here, but a deliberate choice and appointment for this to be our life.

Verse 4

For when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction; just as it has come to pass, and as you know. . . .What grounds did Paul have for warning the Thessalonians that afflictions would follow their new vision of life? Paul, remembering himself as Saul, had a real insight into the nature and weakness of a traditional religious fanatic. He knew what "Sauls" did and could do in his homeland and that they were still actively pursuing him. He also knew that Jews in every locality were aroused with similar feelings against this new teaching. Why should there be any difference in Macedonia? It did not take long to prove that fanatics, synagogue leaders, neighbors and mobs would readily involve themselves in the vicious persecution of the new converts. He who wrote to Timothy, "Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (II Tim. 3 : 12), knew what Jesus had meant about His followers being persecuted (Mth. 5 : 12, Lk. 21 : 12, John 15 : 20).

Religion has a special and peculiar grasp on people which sometimes arouses fanaticism and other violent reactions. The offense against one's religion by someone

else, be it only by rejecting it and accepting another, causes reactions which, even in the twentieth century, create trying situations. As Christians it is imperative that we always guard our own hearts against feelings that would prove us as having fallen low into this realm of experience. Even some "ecumenically minded" people are not free from prejudice, for there are cases when the real ecumenical spirit of tolerance, love and justice fails to show itself in the handling of actual situations.

Verse 5

For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor would be in vain. . . .Paul had two things in his mind which would not leave him in peace. He knew the disturbing nature of the persecutions in Thessaloniki and the effect of ever present slanders, and he wanted to find out what the state of the faith of his converts was. He says, "For fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you". The temptation was to turn back from the moral and spiritual light in order to avoid physical persecution and loss of property. Physical ill treatment is painful, but people seem more ready to stand physical persecution for their convictions than loss of their property. Many a conqueror has found that he can suppress uprisings in the occupied countries much more effectively by depriving people of their property than by any other means. In Thessaloniki, as Paul knew well, the property of the brethren was at stake. The question in his mind was whether they could stand such trials or whether his labor in their midst had been "in vain". Paul was not concerned with what people would say about him or do to him, but he was

concerned about the spiritual welfare and faith of the Thessalonians.

Verse 6

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— . . .The first verse of this chapter, "Therefore..we were willing to stay at Athens alone", and the first word of this verse help us to conclude that I Thessalonians was not written from Athens but in the next city to which Paul went, namely Corinth (Acts 18 : 1). "But now", ἄρτι (arti), means a coincidence of time, "just now", and implies the immediate present. It is just now that Timothy has brought good and joyous news concerning the faith and love of the Thessalonians. They have a good recollection and they not only "long", ποθοῦντες (pothountes), to see, but, ἐπιποθοῦντες (epipothountes), "long intensely" to see the apostles just as the apostles long to see them.

Paul's great evangelistic zeal to preach in Corinth and the news of the Thessalonian's needs must have been the causes which brought the three apostles together again in Corinth. In the letter to the Thessalonians only Timothy's coming is mentioned for he only was sent to Thessaloniki (I Thess. 3 : 1-2). Silas' coming is mentioned only in Acts 18 : 5 for he had not been sent to Thessaloniki and Paul probably saw no need of mentioning him in his letter to the Thessalonians.

Verse 7

for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith,

. . .Because such happy news had been brought to him, Paul was finally relieved from his inner agony and distress, *θλίψει* (thlipsei). This means inner painful pressure and affliction, or constraint, *ἀνάγκη* (anangee), which indicates also physical distress or torture which he had suffered since he had left Thessaloniki. The news that the Thessalonians were holding fast to the faith silenced both his inner and outer distress.

Verse 8

for now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. . . .The agony which the Thessalonians had to suffer was like death to Paul but the news of their faith was a relief like a new life. In Romans 8 : 36 he uses the words of the Psalmist, "For thy sake we are being killed all the day long" (Ps. 44 : 22), and he writes to the Corinthians, "I am in peril every hour. . .I die every hour" (I Cor. 15 : 30-31b, II Cor. 11 : 23). Paul was so greatly wrapped up in the success or failure of the Thessalonian church that his outlook and grasp upon life would be affected should they fail. He felt, I think, even more specifically that if they had believed the rumors concerning him, then his influence in Macedonia and elsewhere would be hurt and that he would be shut out from further work. His work was his life. Thessaloniki was so strategically located that success there meant the possibility of his going on in his great vision and campaign towards Rome, but failure meant that he would have to give up this mission and purpose of life surrendering his goal (Acts 22 : 21) in a deadly and disappointing fashion.

Verse 9

For what thanksgiving can we render to God for you,

for all the joy which we feel for your sake before our God, . . .Paul explains more clearly that joy is the essential element in his life's work for God's cause. This life-giving joy is so great that he wonders in what way he can express his gratitude to God for it. It is a joy in His presence, for God Himself is the source of joy, and our success throughout all our endeavor is due to His grace; it is His gift to us.

Verse 10

praying earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? . . .Paul's enthusiasm is exceedingly great; his prayer for them is ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ (hyperekperissou). περισσοῦ (perissou) means more than usual, exceedingly much. The two additional prepositions ὑπέρ (hyper) and ἐκ (ek) show the extraordinary way in which he pours out in prayer his yearning to see them in person. This verse shows Paul's boundless love for them and yet it is not so boundless as to prevent him from seeing what is missing in their faith. Paul usually uses the word ἀναπληρῶ (anapliro) with additional prepositions to give the idea of filling up or completing (I Cor. 16 : 17, II Cor. 9 : 12, 11 : 9, Phil. 2 : 30, Col. 1 : 24) but here καταρτίσαι (katartisae) means to furnish completely, indicating that the missing part may not be so great as to prevent the achievement of their whole faith in its full integrity.

Verse 11

Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you; . . .It is worth noticing that the Greek for "direct" is in the singular, κατευθύναι (kateuthynae) not κατευθύνοιεν (kateuthinoien) which

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would be plural. The singular form denotes the unity of Father and Son in the work of grace to man. Either the Father does the work through the Son or both act as one for only one subject "directs".

Verse 12

*and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you . . .*With the wish that they might again be led to the Thessalonians, Paul includes the earnest desire that the Thessalonians be led by the Lord to increase and abound in love. The words πλεονάσαι (pleonasae) and περισσεύσαι (periseusae), increase or abound, are used in a transitive sense denoting that this love is a divine gift activated in and through man but a gift which increases with use. Paul makes it clear that love increases by loving not only other Christians but "all men" whether they seem to deserve this love or not.

Paul sets himself and his colleagues as the example for the Thessalonians to follow. From this example they could see that this love was not a mere feeling or sentiment, but a creative power making life and personality grow without limit. It is the fruit of the Spirit of God (Gal. 5 : 22) which provides an inward invincible strength to transform all relations and manifestations of life into expressions of spiritual and everlasting value (I Cor. 13).

The pressing need of our present world condition is the ability for all people to live together. Two world wars and the tremendous progress of applied science have brought not only great masses of men of different races and social habit intimately together but also reduced the size of the world so that no real distances now

exist. The differences in morals and mores, in habit of thought, and outlook on life do not change with ease. With barriers such as distance removed, the clash of fundamental differences is strongly felt. One of the ways by which people can live together more adequately is for the Christian way of love to be practiced more widely.

Verse 13

so that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. . . .Real love makes men blameless. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5 : 22a). Holiness is not just an attribute but a state of the whole personality in the presence of God. "With all the saints" means that the Lord is and will always be with His own, the saints.

PARAPHRASE OF I THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER FOUR

Verse 1 And now in the last place, brethren, we entreat and summon you in the Lord Jesus that, just as you learned from us how it is necessary for you to make your way through this life step by step, and how you ought to accommodate yourselves to the desire of God, you should grow and improve yourselves even
Verse 2 more and more. For you know what particular precepts we set before you through the Lord
Verse 3 Jesus because this is God's will for you that you be pure in heart and life: that you hold
Verse 4 yourselves back from fornication, that each one of you know how to secure for himself his own wife that this relationship be kept sacred and honorable, not dominated and
Verse 5 controlled by improper (or wrong) desires
Verse 6 as do the nations who know not God; so that no one go beyond the boundaries of right principle and take advantage of his brother in this matter because the Lord is an avenger of all these things as we have told you beforehand and assured you by our own strong
Verse 7 witnessing to you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in the pure and holy conduct
Verse 8 which He expects from us all. Therefore he who disregards and transgresses these principles and rights of others, does not render void a man's will, but transgresses God's own will, Who gives you His Holy Spirit.

Verse 9 But now concerning the personal regard and love for each other, there is not really any need for me to write you regarding this, for you are yourselves taught by God how to love
Verse 10 one another, for indeed you are already doing this towards all the brethren that are in
Verse 11 Macedonia. We urge you though, brethren, that you seek to develop unceasingly in this regard, and that you ambitiously aim to lead quiet lives by giving attention to your own business, and that you be not inactive and idle, but work with your hands just as we
Verse 12 have charged you; so that the mode of your living and your conduct may appear fitting and decent to the outsiders, and so that you do not come to need in material things for your own life and welfare.

Verse 13 In the next place though, we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, concerning those who have died, that you may not be thrown into sorrow as the rest are who are
Verse 14 without any hope. Now, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way God will bring back with Jesus when He comes, all those who have fallen asleep (so that they shall not be absent and shut out from entering the kingdom when the Lord comes to complete
Verse 15 it). For we tell you this on the authority of the Lord's word that we who are still living in this life when the Lord returns shall not in any way anticipate those who have died in
Verse 16 entering the kingdom. For the Lord Himself shall come from heaven with a summons, cry,

accompanied by the voice of an archangel and by the call of God's trumpet. Then those who have died in faith shall first be resurrected,

Verse 17 then, next, we who are living shall in company with them, neither preceding the others, be seized and carried away swiftly in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we are always

Verse 18 to be with the Lord. Therefore encourage and strengthen one another with these words of comfort.

ON THE TEXT OF I THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER FOUR

Verse 1

Finally, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you learned from us how you ought to live and please God, just as you are doing, you do so more and more. . . .In this verse through verse 8 Paul deals with the moral issues. He reminds the Thessalonians of the actual example which he and his colleagues set before the Thessalonians as they were indoctrinating them into the Christian faith. Although the Thessalonians had been doing well, he appeals to them again that they improve in their practical Christian living and behavior.

Verse 2

For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus, . . .He emphasizes that what he told them to do was not his own idea but that it was the command of Jesus which requires obedience.

Verse 3

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from immorality; . . .He clarifies that this command is part of God's own will. "Your sanctification" means consecration or becoming holy. "That you abstain from immorality"—literally the text reads from the specific immorality, fornication. Some manuscripts add πάσης (pasis) which means all kinds of fornication, indicating more than the commonly defined prostitution. Man should be considered and dealt with as a valuable

and sacred personality, never as a mere sex object. Human beings deserve a full recognition of their infinite value and honor as likenesses of God. Any handling of a person which treats him merely as an object of sex and lust is improper and is a moral degeneration unworthy of Christians. The two great wars, which showed great devaluation of human beings, must make us ponder more seriously this issue. Remember what Jesus said, "That everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mth. 5 : 28). This *is* a danger that confronts our civilization today.

Verse 4

that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, . . .All women should frame this revolutionary statement! At the time when a woman was considered by the Romans as "res", an object of market value, Paul set forth this strong idea knocking out the century old philosophy about the female sex. ἐν ἁγιασμῷ (en agiasmo), consecration or sanctification raises her up to the divine level and τιμῇ (timi) gives her an honored place in society and life. The word εἰδέναι (eidenae), know or acknowledge, does not mean mere knowledge but rather the mental power for reflection, calculation and evaluation. It is the power which works to build up principles of life. Thus, Paul indicates the need to learn the underlying principles which can make wedded life holy and honorable.

Verse 5

not in the passion or lust like heathen who do not know God; . . .The original text indicates a strong, unbridled

and erotic impulse which Paul denounced as wholly unbecoming to a Christian. The motives of such behavior were selfish and led to irresponsible actions which could not establish healthy family and social relationships. Paul was writing from Corinth where the famous hedonistic philosophy was prevalent among the non-Christian and where life was so extravagant that strangers hesitated to visit the city. Even passages in the famous works of Plato advocated this lustful way of life so foreign to the Christian concept. Because Paul could see in a most realistic way how this much practiced erotic life killed the spirit in man and spread a life which was alien to the real vision of God, he warned the Thessalonians against this danger.

Verse 6

that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, . . .How can one consider another a brother or a sister and then do wrong to him by misusing his personality? Such mistreatment is inherently against all moral and divine laws and naturally calls upon the transgressor an accounting which is ordained by the Lord Himself. "No man" or "brother" means the rights of all human beings, men and women. Any transgression is a violation of God's moral order and its penalty is inescapable. No wonder there is such a tragedy in many a home and such restlessness and discomfort in many a soul. "*as we solemnly forewarned you.* . . .This phrase is rendered more literally as, "as we have told you beforehand and proved to you, or assured you, by our strong witnessing to you".

Verse 7

For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness.

. . .God's calling to us is moral. "Called us" refers to the starting point of our new life in Christ, while consecration, or sanctification, ἁγιασμὸς (hagiasmos), is the whole spiritual atmosphere in which we are called to live.

Verse 8

Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. . . .Disregard, ἀθετῶν (atheton), means to refuse assent. Christians are not forced to a mode of life. In spite of all teaching, indoctrination and exhortation, it is a deliberate choice and consent. A violation of the moral order is not merely a rejection of this moral order but a rejection of God also Who establishes this order. One wonders if Paul had in mind an actual case of licentious behavior which Timothy might have reported to him. The text does not imply such a case, but it might well have been possible.

Verse 9

But concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; . . .The second of the specific messages that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerns the personal regard and love which Christians hold for each other. The word used is φιλαδελφίας (philadephias). It has three components, φιλῶ (philo), I love, the copulative "a", and δελφὶς (delphis) meaning womb. This is the love which exists between those whose lives have the same source, or have been molded in the same mould. "Taught by God" is a rendering of the composite word Θεοδίδακτος (theodhidactos). "Theo" is God and διδάσκω (didasco) is the teaching which implies a practical demonstration and not merely theory.

God taught us how to love our brethren by having first loved us (cf. John 4 : 19), and the quality of His love can be witnessed in the life of Jesus.

Verse 10

and indeed you do love all the brethren throughout Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren to do so more and more, . . .Two words with nearly the same meaning are rendered in English as "love" in these two verses. Love, ἀγάπη (agape) is never merely tender feelings, but a creative urge implemented or activated by the spirit of God. It is free from any selfish motive and it is concerned almost entirely with the welfare of the person or object toward which it is directed. It is characterized by the willingness and readiness to sacrifice. The other word used is the first component of "philadelphias" from φιλῶ and δελφὶς (philo and delphis) which implies fondness, attachment or affection like that to a friend. There is also the word ἐρως (eros) which is rendered in English as "love". It is, however, a passionate desire with a motive which centers around the giver rather than the recipient. The idea of selection for one's own self is always present in "eros" while "love" is directed even to the unworthy. The dim of "eros" is its own satisfaction, especially used in the sense of sexual satisfaction. στοργὴ (storgee) is also love but refers mostly to parental affection, while φίλτρον (philtron), which derived from φιλῶ (philo), is a charm, or attraction, used today for the attraction or the endearment of the children.

Paul expresses his appreciation that the Thessalonians opened their hearts with love to the brethren of Macedonia. There was possibly a growing communication and fellowship between the brethren of Philippi, Beroea and those

of Thessaloniki. The expression "throughout Macedonia" is a legitimate exaggeration when we consider how few local churches there were in Macedonia at that time. It is apparently not the quantity but the quality of love that Paul enthusiastically appreciates. One question arises, however, whether there were converts in other places through which Paul had passed, Amphipolis or Apollonia, or in the neighboring villages where churches had been founded as in Philippi, Thessaloniki, Beroea? If we take into consideration the ardent zeal to evangelize that the Christians possessed, certain individuals might have been converted to Christianity. The Thessalonians had been helpful examples to the brethren of Macedonia (cf. 1 : 7) by visiting other churches in need and also by offering hospitality to other Christians coming to their port city on business. When we take into consideration what he adds below, their zeal and enthusiasm, rather than their conduct was most likely the "example" which Paul mentions. He urges them to grow more and more in this love to the brethren.

Verses 11 and 12

to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we charged you; so that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody. . . ."To aspire to live quietly", φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν (philotimeisthae hysihazein), means more exactly to desire to be honored in keeping quiet, or to strive to be tranquil. Timothy must have told Paul about some disorders which he had seen or heard about in the church of Thessaloniki. Through the impulse of their earnest zeal and enthusiasm they were probably going to extremes by holding numerous meetings in

various places in and around the city, and the conduct of such meetings may have been disorderly. Because of their enthusiasm and their belief that the Lord would soon return, they neglected their work and expressed much concern and inappropriate interest in the affairs of others. By not working, they created needs for themselves which made them dependent on others. Naturally some would help them once or twice, but others would refuse to encourage this laziness and escape from work. Those who attempted to intervene in the private affairs of the other brethren were thus disturbing the peace of the Christian fellowship. Paul, therefore, tells them that they should work for their living and tend quietly to their own business. It is proper at this point to notice that Paul here urges against expecting the Lord to return immediately.

Verse 13

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. . . .Paul deals here with another problem which Timothy must have reported to him. The Thessalonians seemed to be concerned about their dear ones who had been converted to Christ and who had shared in the hope of being present at the Lord's return, but who had died in the meantime. What would become of these? Had they lost the opportunity of life with Christ? Paul tells them no, that the dead are just asleep and that they will wake up. He stresses the hope of resurrection. Many of the heathen philosophers and others shared the idea of resurrection, but the majority of the people did not, and hence, their grief was great at the death of a loved one. Paul does not say that the

Christians should not grieve at all, for any separation from a dear person causes grief, but he stresses, "not as others do who have no hope". There is a normal measure of grief that is not denied to anyone. Death is called "sleep" because resurrection or awakening is going to follow.

Verse 14

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. . . . οὕτως καὶ ὁ Θεὸς (outos kai ho Theos) means "even so *and* God" emphasizing the fact that God, who raised Jesus from the dead, will raise all the believers (cf. I Thess. 1 : 10, I Cor. 6 : 14, II Cor. 4 : 14, Rom. 8 : 11, 10 : 9).

Verse 15

For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. . . .This is a common expression in colloquial speech of the Mediterranean world. Paul refers here, as he does when he reminds the elders of the Church of Ephesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20 : 35b), to a saying of the Lord which is not recorded in the gospels. Some have suggested that Paul implies that he, as well as the others to whom he writes, will still be living when the Lord returns. This is, however, a hypothetical statement, denoting a possibility not a necessity. He seems to mean that whosoever will be living on that day, at that time, will not be ahead of those who have died. It will be a simultaneous presentation of all, dead or alive.

Verses 16, 17 and 18

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. . . .This whole section is a little apocalypse or eschatology.

Therefore comfort one another with these words. . . .Jesus spoke about the life after physical death saying that the dead go to another sphere called "paradise" (cf. the words of the thief on the cross, Lk. 23 : 43, or the parable of Lazarus and the rich, Lk. 16 : 19ff.). He also referred to the resurrection of the dead (cf. Mth. 22 : 29-32, Mk. 12 : 24ff., Lk. 14 : 14b, 20 : 35-36). In His apocalyptic teaching (Mth. 25) He says that at the resurrection of the dead, the merits of the righteous and the demerits of the evil will appear. In the modern viewpoint this is a question on which many desire not to be dogmatic, because as they say, none either good or evil has passed from this sphere of life to the other and returned to tell us what has happened.

From what we know of the personality both of God and of ourselves, two considerations are, however, helpful. Human spirits throughout this life are conscious and active, continually accumulating experience. It is difficult to believe that they pass into a period many times longer than the average human life on earth in which they lie dormant, without either consciousness or activity. There is also a fundamental moral question which anyone who is free from the grasp of naturalism must face. Today, when modern science has revealed to us

a living universe with its dynamic nature, these questions demand a thorough and earnest consideration. If God is a loving creator whom we earnestly call our Father, could His moral nature and holy character destroy and annihilate the outstanding of His creatures on earth? Can love in its sacred nature destroy its own expression of personality by destroying its creation, the human personality? Would any healthy and morally integrated personality do anything of this sort to its own best creative achievement? Our moral sense strongly says, "No".

Since it is not possible for the mind to grasp the idea of nothingness and the nonexistence of that which presently exists, or moral consciousness to reconcile the idea of a loving Father with destruction of His created children, then the spirits of the dead, both good and evil, must be conscious and active in some spirit realm. More questions emerge. Do the hosts of good and evil spirits have influence upon our life and times now? Does each spirit develop in the direction of more perfect good, or more utter evil, according to the training of its life here? (Rev. 22 : 10-11).

I would like to share with my readers the following lines from the poem *Adonais* by Percy Bysche Shelley which he wrote on the death of his friend John Keats.

> Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
> He hath awakened from the dream of life—
> He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
> Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
> And that unrest which men miscall delight,
> Can touch him not and torture not again;

PARAPHRASE OF I THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER FIVE

Verse 1 But concerning the times and seasons of Christ's second coming, there is no need for me to write you about it in this letter, because
Verse 2 you yourselves already know (for I have told you while I was with you) that the day on which the Lord will return is unknown to all of us. His coming will be sudden, just as a thief makes his sudden unexpected appearance
Verse 3 in the night. This fact, however, has a vital meaning for us. When those to whom this new and true gospel has not yet come, are going on in the sinful pleasures and business of their life without thought or fellowship with God, and are looking for no interruption, unexpectedly catastrophe will overtake them as the travail of a woman with child come upon her. From this overtaking of doom, they will find it absolutely beyond their power to
Verse 4 escape. But you, brethren, are not living in such uncertainty. You have been informed that the Lord is to come and of what will occur when He comes and I am now but recalling the fact to your memory so that that day may not overtake you like the sudden visits
Verse 5 of thieves. You have all come into light and are living fully informed in these matters. We are no longer to count ourselves among those who do not know and so think we can

follow them in their practices of their lives.
We are not of the night, nor are we finding
Verse 6 our way in darkness. Let us then not go on
giving no heed to the possibility of this sudden
event as, naturally, those who are still without
the light of the gospel do, but let us be alert
and have real self control, be well poised and
Verse 7 collected in mind. It is natural, of course, that
those who are indifferent and who go on
unconscious of the possibility of being suddenly
interrupted in their living, do so because they
are entirely ignorant of all this meaning of life
and its events, but they also who are living in
Verse 8 excesses are doing so in the same ignorance.
Since to us has come the light which gives us
full understanding of what we are doing, let
us be thoughtful; let us be ready for each day
by including in our preparation for the day
the habit of cultivating the guarding influence
of a spirit of confidence and love. This will
be the breastplate of our armor, our helmet
being the uplifting power of confident ex-
pectation that we shall not only be relieved
from the ills of the present earthly experiences
but will also gain the blessedness of sharing
the fulness of the best life in His kingdom
Verse 9 when the Lord returns to earth. For God did
not intend that we should suffer any ill judg-
ment but acquire our full and perfect self
realization through our Lord Jesus Christ
Verse 10 Who died for us, that whether we still live when
He comes, or have fallen asleep, we may all of
Verse 11 us live together with Him. So then with these

thoughts, or assurances, console and comfort among yourselves and strengthen and build up one another in faith, just as, I learn from Timothy, you have been doing.

Verse 12 And now I want to urge on your thought, brethren, that you know and acknowledge those men who are working hard and are in the high offices of the church according to the Lord's appointment, and who council with you and advise you with their best information.

Verse 13 I would also urge you that you hold them in very high deference and regard and love because of what they are doing. Cultivate peace and good relationships among yourselves.

Verse 14 We urge you, brethren, counsel those who are disorderly, comfort and cheer the fainthearted, hold out a strengthening hand to those who have not a very strong hold upon the principles of this new life in Christ, and have

Verse 15 a patient spirit toward all. See to it that none of you return an unfair deal to him who had committed one against you. Always be ready to do good and right in all your dealings with

Verse 16 each other and with every man. Have always a

Verse 17 happy and joyous spirit. Practice a constant

Verse 18 spirit of prayer. Be ready to render thanks for everything that befalls you, for this is the attitude that God wills you to have in life,

Verse 19 through the help of Jesus Christ. Maintain the fire of the spirit in you expressing itself in an

Verse 20 inspired life and abounding holy feelings. Do not treat with contempt or mockery the messages received directly at the Lord's prompting.

Verse 21 At the same time examine everyone and the spirit with which he presents his message to see whether or not it is all good and genuine and to whatever proves to be healthy and
Verse 22 sound, give your attention and thought. Refrain from every evil in whatever form it appears whether in persons, suggestions, purposes or desires.

Verse 23 And now may the God of loving unity and harmonious relationships, the God of peace, set you apart unto Himself entirely and trust your whole being both spirit and body to Him to be guarded and kept sound and complete in all its parts, that it may be entirely free from cause for censure when our Lord
Verse 24 Jesus comes. The One Who calls you is faithful and He will make possible this blameless keeping of yourselves.

Verse 25 Brethren, pray for us.

Verse 26 Greet each one of the brethren with the sacred kiss of fraternal love.

Verse 27 I put you under oath and solemnly entrust you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren.

Verse 28 The loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

ON THE TEXT OF I THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER FIVE

Verse 1

But as to the times and the seasons; . . .In this paragraph Paul answers an eschatological question which the Thessalonians apparently wanted him to answer. Although καιρὸς (kaeros), season, usually has a qualitative notion and χρόνος (chronos), time, a quantitative one, it is unlikely that there is such a difference in their meanings here. This is rather an idiomatic expression concerning Christ's return (cf. Acts 1 : 9). Jesus Himself is recorded to have spoken in a similar way, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Mth. 24 : 36, Mk. 13 : 32).

brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. . . .This phrase does not say that it is not necessary to have anything written to you, but "you have no need", no use, no advantage or profit in our writing to you about the particular time of the Lord's coming.

Verse 2

For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, . . .Paul had already told the Thessalonians about the day of the Lord's return. "The day of the Lord" meaning the judgment day is a phrase used for the first time by Amos (5 : 18). Paul makes it clear that this is the day of Christ's return (cf. Phil. 1 : 6, 10, 2 : 6), a sudden event (cf. Mth. 24 : 43, Lk. 12 : 39) which will come upon the people whether

they are ready or unready (as it is suggested in verses 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9.)

Verse 3

When people say, "There is peace and security", then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape. . . .This verse reminds us of a saying of Jesus (Mth. 24 : 37ff. and Lk. 17 : 26ff.) in which He indicates that man becomes secure in his attachment to routine life and does not suspect calamity or "destruction". Destruction, ὀλεθρος (olethros), means ruin, and hence, death, but it does not necessarily mean the wiping out of existence or annihilation. In its spiritual sense it means separation from Him Who is the real life for man (cf. II Thess. 1 : 9). The expression, "I will turn my face from them" (Ezek. 39 : 23-24), is the prophetic expression of the separation of man from the source of life. A similar picture of the woman in her travail is found in Jeremiah 6 : 24, 22 : 23 and also in Micah 4 : 9. Those who have lived through a war know what sudden destruction means. They remember how destruction crept up when people were sound asleep in their homes even though the threat of war had been accumulating for quite a time on the political horizon.

Verse 4

But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. . . .Although the coming of the Lord will be a sudden event, the believers will not be taken by surprise. "In darkness" may mean that the believers are not in the darkness of evil and sin, and hence, the sudden arrival of the Lord's day will not be

disastrous for them and will not overtake them like the sudden visit of a thief.

Verse 5

For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. . . ."Sons of light" or "of darkness" denote the character and the nature of living while "of the day" or "of the night" denote the period or time. Christians are the light of the world or "sons" of the Light (cf. Mth. 5 : 14, Lk. 16 : 8-9, John 8 : 12, Ephes. 5 : 8). The Thessalonians had all come into the light, both because of their character of life and because of their full knowledge of the Lord's coming. They were unlike those who led a dark and sinful life in the night of ignorance.

Verse 6

So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. . . .Paul refers here to the practical application of the principles and kind of life mentioned in verses 4 and 5. The day of the Lord is the day of the believers; they should not, therefore, fall asleep or go astray into evil or sin. They must be spiritually and morally alert so as to serve God's purpose and will. The word *νήφωμεν* (nifomen), be sober, is used commonly to refer to not drinking wine, but metaphorically it means to be wary of all evil, cautious of the dangers of darkness and night. All verbs in this passage are used in a metaphorical sense. Paul wishes them to have real self control, abstain from drink and from doing other harmful acts which are unbecoming to Christians; they are to be masters over their own passions and inclinations.

Verse 7

*For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. . . .*Paul's allegory based on the actual physical life continues. He stresses that no one should be sleeping or be indifferent when alertness is needed in the events that are of the utmost importance to man. Modern man has changed the habits and mode of his life. There is an old saying which runs like this, "Night is for man to rest, wild beasts only roam about for their prey at night".

Verse 8

*But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. . . .*Since we have the light and the information that the gospel of Christ has brought to us, we must have the love and faith that can protect us against all evil and the hopeful expectation for the event that will make us participants in the kingdom of God. The word γρηγορῶμεν (gregoromen) of verse 6 and 10 must have reminded Paul of the polemic cry γρηγορεῖτε (gregoreite), be awake, for he uses the different articles of the warrior for his spiritual war. He gives a fuller description of the Christian armor in Ephesians 6 : 13-17. "Hope of salvation" is objective genitive (cf. I Thess. 1 : 3, Ro. 5 : 2, Col. 1 : 27). Salvation in its negative sense means deliverance from the coming painful experience, "wrath" (cf. I Thess. 1 : 10), while positively it means communion or being together with the Lord, having a share in His kingdom. In the following verses 9 and 10, the hope of salvation forestalls discouragements and faint-heartedness on the one hand, while, on the

other, it strengthens the believers in a determined race against all evil.

Verse 9

For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, . . ."He has not destined us" is in the original Greek text *οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς* (ouk etheto hemas). There is a difference between *προώρισεν* (proorisen), destined, and *ἔθετο* (etheto) as used in the text. The latter implies a creative action or making. The text should read, "God did not make us for wrath or anger"; God has not created us in order to indulge His wrath on us. It is inconceivable that God as a loving Father brought to existence His children, the work of His creative love, in order to give an outlet to the anger that abides in His nature. He made us rather "to obtain salvation". This clause makes clearer the difference. The word *περιποίησιν* (peripoeisin), obtain, means owning, possessing, keeping, preserving, and *σωτηρία* (soteria), salvation from; *σώζω* (sozo), to save, means to keep alive and well, sound and whole. There is, therefore, a sound and sure basis for our Christian hope. God in creating us, because of His boundless love, made us in response to His nature of love so that we might share the best and happiest existence, the existence of being preserved in and by His love, the existence of being wholly in communion with Him through Jesus Christ.

Verse 10

who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him. . . .In the original text there is *ἅμα* (hama) which, as an adverb means at the same time or

at the same place, and as a preposition means together. The verse should read, "Who died for us that whether we wake or sleep we might live altogether or at the same time with Him" (cf. Ro. 14:8-9).

Verse 11

*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. . . .*In verses 4 through 10 Paul reminds the Thessalonians of and instructs them in all things which they must do to live the blameless life of the sons of light, and to achieve the end of their faith and endeavor, their salvation.

Verse 12

But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, . . ."To respect", εἰδέναι (eidenae), means to know or to acknowledge. "Those who labor", κοπιῶντας (kopiontas), is more literally those who work hard. Dealing with a human being is always hard and trying labor, demanding much time, patience and energy. "Are over you", προϊσταμένους (proistamenous), means having a responsible office of leadership, "your leaders". "Admonish", νουθετοῦντας (nouthetountas) from νοῦς-τίθημι (nous-tithemi), is to put in mind, to advise and refers to "your counsellors".

Verse 13

and to esteem them very highly in love . . ."To esteem them", ἡγεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς (hegisthae autous), is to regard them, think of them "very highly". ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ (hyperekperissou) is literally above what would be much; it is, therefore, eminently, or very, very much. The

verse would read then, "Regard them most eminently in love".

because of their work. . . .Paul advises the Thessalonians to regard extremely highly those who minister in love to their spiritual needs. In the moral and spiritual realm especially, any office, work or ministry is inseparable from the personalities involved. Ministry for the cause of Christ is a calling, not a business and not a trade. The Lord said, "You will know them by their fruits" (Mth. 7 : 16, 20).

Be at peace among yourselves. . . .The original text reads, "within yourselves", ἐν ἑαυτοῖς (en eautois), which could mean in outward appearance and in one's innermost self. One may show calmness and serenity outwardly while being restless and indignant within. Paul may also mean that they should be at peace with one another and since this follows his advice to esteem highly those who lead them, he may mean that there should be peace between the leaders of the new church and the followers.

Verse 14

And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the idle, . . .The word in the text for "idle" is ἀτάκτους (ataktous) which means the undisciplined, the disorderly. Its meaning is primarily a military one referring to the irregulars who do not keep their posts. It means, hence, a lawless one who leads a disorderly and irregular life, and implies also, in many cases, violations of the moral order and principles. Were these the ones whom he had in mind in Chapter 4 verses 3-8 and 11? They should "admonish" them. This is the same word as Paul uses in verse 12 in the second person plural, νουθετεῖτε (noutheteite).

The act of admonishing must not be done "ex cathedra", from a position of authority, but with a kind and gentle way of reasoning with them. It suggests real counselling to help them to a nobler and more orderly life (cf. II Thess. 3 : 11).

encourage the faint-hearted, . . .παραμυθεῖσθε (paramytheisthe) means rather to console or comfort. *help the weak,* . . .ἀντέχεσθε (antechesthe) is to hold up the weak or give them the necessary support so that they can stand and not fall. This is a good rule and motive for all social services and ministries. *be patient with them all.* . . .μακροθυμεῖτε (makrothymeite) is a composite word μακρὸς (makris), long or extended, and θυμὸς (thymos), soul, spirit, feeling or thought. The church of Thessaloniki must have had many problems that demanded wisdom, spiritual maturity, good psychology and strength.

Verse 15

See that none of you repays evil for evil, . . .Compare this with "an eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand. ." (Exod. 21 : 24-25). Remember also the words of the Lord in Mth. 5 : 38 and the following verses where he set a new and positive law of life similar to the one here, *but always seek to do good to one another and to all.* "Seek to do good" is τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε (to agathon diokete). The word for seek here is different than that used by Jesus when He says, "But seek first the kingdom of God" (Mth. 6 : 33). There it is, ζητεῖτε (zeteete) but here it is διώκετε (diokete) implying to be set in quick and active motion to do not only good, but τὸ ἀγαθὸν (to agathon), anything that is good whether in action, thought or feeling. It suggests that some haste must be directed in finding or creating an opportunity

to give expression to such good. Christian life cannot be interpreted in negative or neutral terms. We are not to render an evil for an evil nor merely resist patiently any trying situation, but we are to find any or every possible way of actively doing good to the offender. Christ said, "But I say love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mth. 5 : 44). *to one another, and to all...* Paul reminds them that this is not only for the believers, but for everyone without discrimination. What a difference there would be in all the world if this principle and philosophy of life were practiced and lived by all Christians!

Verse 16

Rejoice always, ...There are two indispensable characteristics of the Christian which ought to make him clearly different from other men. The first is unceasing joy. Whether there is temptation, painful toil, persecutions or slanders, he has the power to keep a joyous spirit. It is, and should be, expected of him to create an atmosphere of deep serenity and joy which comes from living ever in the presence of God (I Thess. 3 : 9). Our communion with Him is an endless source of joy (cf. Phil. 4 : 4).

Verse 17

pray constantly, ...(cf. Rom. 12 : 12, Col. 4 : 2, Eph. 6 : 18) The second of these characteristics is unceasing prayer. The word in the text ἀδιαλείπτως (adialeiptos) means unceasingly or without any interruption. To have a constant communion with God, to have a real and effective awareness of His presence and to live with all our actions, motives, pursuits and thoughts molded

by His spirit in close relationship and dependence on Him is constant prayer.

Verse 18

give thanks . . .We are to give thanks to God Who shows always His loving kindness and grace to us. *in all circumstances*; *for*. . . ἐν παντὶ (en panti) is neuter in gender and should be translated "times; for": circumstances is feminine. Paul means here to say that we must be thankful to God for everything, not only the agreeable and the pleasant but also the negative of these. A Christian should never be a victim in life; all things and circumstances should add to his spiritual stature and character, giving reason to praise God. This is not easy indeed, but, *this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you* . . .If His will is activated in us, it is attainable in the life of a Christian. Many things seem to us very different due to the perspective from which we view them or the spirit with which we face them. If we set ourselves in His will to do something by the aid of His spirit, we would be able to praise Him for everything that comes to be added as a new experience to our life. This is what God wills and expects from us as is revealed in and through Jesus Christ.

Verse 19

Do not quench the Spirit, . . .Paul uses here a metaphor comparing this spirit to a flame that illumines the mind, inflames the heart and keeps the believer active and alive in the kind and quality of life that best suits a Christian. Indifference, doubt, disobedience, falling astray and neglect of prayer would deprive the heart of the blessed presence of the Spirit. He advises the

Thessalonians against letting such a thing happen to them (cf. Eph. 4 : 30).

Verse 20

do not despise prophesying, . . .In the text προφητείας (prophetias) is a plural noun and not a gerund; it is, therefore, prophecies and prophetic utterances. We should remember that Paul's teachings and discourses in the synagogues were based on the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. A prophet, from πρόφημι (prophemi) is generally one who speaks in front of or in the presence of others. He speaks about things to happen in the future. In the biblical sense, he voices a divine message, a divine truth to the hearing or notice of others: "Thus saith the Lord". Paul suggests that the believers ought not to despise such prophetic utterances but rather ought to take them into serious consideration.

Verse 21

but test everything; . . .In the text "but" is omitted. If "everything" or πάντα (panta) is a singular accusative of the masculine πᾶς (pas) meaning everyone, then Paul would mean that no prophet should be rejected without giving him a thorough examination and extracting whatever truth is presented. πάντα (panta) may also be a plural accusative of the neuter, meaning all things or everything. This is improbable, however, as Paul was very exact in pointing out that things are evil by their nature and need not be tested to find their real value. Evil things are contrary to the moral and spiritual order of life and contrary to the will of God. πάντα (panta) may again be a plural accusative of the neuter but refer

to "all the spirits", *πάντα τὰ πνεύματα* (panta ta pneumata), (cf. I John 4 : 1). Paul elsewhere suggests a distinction between spirits (I Col. 12 : 10). Apparently Paul had either this last meaning in mind, or most probably, the first, that of hearing and testing a messenger. I, however, incline more to the meaning of distinguishing between the spirits.

Verse 22

abstain from every form of evil. . . .Here we have a more general rule which is exceedingly important for the high character of every Christian and Christian leader. Men of high Christian character should recognize evil even if it appears "as an angel of light" (cf. II Cor. 11 : 14) and refrain from it.

Verse 23

May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly, . . .In this section, verses 23 through 28, Paul gives his concluding instructions and benedictions. "May God", *Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Θεὸς* (autos the ho Theos), *δὲ* (the) is a conjunctive particle, omitted in the Revised Standard Version, used by Paul with a mild opposing or adversive force, giving a characteristic connotation to the preceding admonitions. Paul tells them that he has exhorted and admonished them on all these "but", *δὲ* (the), it is God who can materialize all these things in their lives. He writes later to the Philippians, "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work" (Phil. 2 : 13). "God of peace" is a dear and common saying of Paul (cf. Rom. 16 : 20, I Col. 14 : 33, II Col. 13 : 11, Phil. 4 : 9, II Thess. 3 : 16). It is peace to be maintained within the Church, in the entire fellowship and brotherhood of the believers,

but it is also a heavenly gift and value within the heart of each individual Christian to secure real happiness and joy in a filial communion and fellowship with God the Father. "Sanctify you" means to make you holy, pure, clean, unspotted and blameless, or free from all forms of evil, acquiring God's own character and motives to be expressed in actual daily living. "Wholly", ὁλοτελεῖς (holoteleis), is used not in the sense of quality, to be perfect, but in the quantitative meaning of the whole personality. The qualitative has already been expressed by "sanctify you" explained more fully by, *and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The original text has ὁλόκληρον τὸ πνεῦμα (holokliron to pneuma), all your spirit, in only the quantitative sense of ὁλοτελεῖς (holoteleis) and leaves no question about what meaning Paul intends. The soul which is the real inner self, the body, and the spirit which is the reasoning faculty of the human soul and the calculating and understanding faculty of the human personality, make up the "all". This "all", Paul instructs, should be kept blameless in order that it might be found' ἀμέμπτως (ameмptos), perfect, when our Lord Jesus Christ comes.

Verse 24

*He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. . . .*Paul emphasizes that the achievement of a whole person can not be achieved by man's own wish or endeavor (see verse 23) nor is there any magic in the words of Paul that can accomplish such a thing. God who has called men unto salvation through Christ can do what seems to be unattainable by man alone. His will and purpose cannot and will not be rendered void. As long as we

do our part by relying on Him and having faith in Him, He will do the remaining work by His grace in the lives of the believers. He is faithful and will not fail to do this.

Verse 25

Brethren, pray for us. . . .Paul covets the prayers of the Thessalonian brethren, as he does elsewhere (cf. Ro. 15 : 30, Eph. 6 : 13, 19).

Verse 26

Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. . . .There are no distinctions, all are included, all those who might have caused some difficulty or uneasiness and all those who had caused no trouble.

Verse 27

I adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren. . . .The letter was not just of personal interest to a few, or to a committee that administered the church; its contents were of a common interest to all who composed the church. They should all have a knowledge of the letter to receive the necessary admonitions, encouragements, information and edifications. No one should miss the opportunity to get a full knowledge of what Paul wrote.

Verse 28

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. . . .Paul's much cherished benediction by which, with different variations, he ends his epistles is the ending of Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonian brethren.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE TEXT OF I THESSALONIANS

Personal Characteristics of Paul that Appear in the Epistle

1. He was a man of leadership which is evident from his intimate acquaintance of conditions over a large territory (1 : 7, 2 : 14) and also from the loyalty with which communities, when he had been away, remained faithful to the movement to which he had introduced them (3 : 6).
2. He was a man of deep emotions (3 : 8).
3. He was deeply concerned about the nature and effect of his reputation (Chapter 2 especially verse 10).
4. He was a man of great commitment to his work and not disheartened by such bitter experiences as those at Philippi (2 : 2).
5. He was able to present his message with more than mere human power, in the power of God's Spirit (1 : 5).
6. His message was not from a secondhand source but had been received from an objective source (2 : 13) which implied a very personal experience, in which his word became authentic and gained real authority.

What Contribution does this Epistle Make to an Understanding of Paul's Theology?

1. It gives quite clearly Paul's eschatological teaching that Christ is coming back to earth (4 : 13-18).

2. It hints at Paul's conception of the kingdom of God (2 : 12).
3. It touches upon the doctrine of "election" (1 : 4) pointing out the part and the initiative of the individual.
4. It begins to explain Paul's concept of God's love and his concept of the love which Christians should express (3 : 12, 4 : 9).
5. It gives Paul's teaching on the Lord's return.

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION ON THE TEXT OF I THESSALONIANS

1. Why did Paul find it necessary to write to the brethren in Thessaloniki?
2. Consider Paul's presentation of the doctrine of election (1 : 4b), compare it with II Thess. 2 : 13, and make your own comments. What bearing does I Thess. 3 : 3 have on this doctrine?
3. What does Paul mean when he says that the gospel came to them "in power" and "in Holy Spirit" (1 : 5)?
4. What is the significance of Paul's teaching that Christ is raised from the dead (1 : 10)? Does it still have significance today? Was it a new concept for the Thessalonians?
5. Why did Paul fear that their visit and labor among the Thessalonians might be "in vain" (2 : 1)?
6. In the face of persecutions and suffering Paul was not afraid. What is fear? What made Paul unafraid (2 : 2)?
7. Did someone openly insinuate that Paul's motives were wrong? Who might it have been? What might they have said (2 : 5-6)?
8. Paul mentions "the church. . .in God" (1 : 1) and "a church of God" (2 : 14). What is his concept of a church? Is there any other kind of church?
9. What is Paul's concept of sin (2 : 16)? Do you agree?
10. Is Satan (2 : 18) a symbol or a reality? What do you think Paul means when he says, "Satan hindered us"?
11. Why does Paul take pains to carefully mention Timothy's credentials (3 : 2)?
12. In Chapter 3, verse 10 Paul mentions that the faith

of the Thessalonians was lacking something. What seems to be missing in their faith?

13. What is the meaning and importance of verse 12, Chapter 3 for our lives today?
14. What is so revolutionary about Paul's concept of marriage for his day and for ours (4 : 4)?
15. What does Paul say about those who have died in faith (4 : 14)? How does he explain the Lord's return (4 : 15-17)? What symbols does he use in his writing about these events?
16. What does "For God has not destined us for wrath" (5 : 9) mean?
17. What is salvation (5 : 9)?
18. What does "seek to do good" mean (5 : 15)? What is its relation to the Golden Rule? What does it mean to live by this principle in our day?
19. What is constant prayer (5 : 17)?
20. What does "Give thanks in all circumstances" (5 : 18) mean? Is it possible? Why?
21. What kind of prayer would Paul expect the Thessalonians to pray for him (5 : 25)? (cf. II Thess. 3 : 1-2) What kinds of prayers do we covet from others?

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF II THESSALONIANS

In continuing our exegetical study of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, we must stop to consider the available information in four distinct but closely related areas which concern the writing of the second epistle to the Thessalonians. Who wrote this letter? When and where was it written? What situation or circumstances made its writing necessary? What is the essential content?

Paul is considered to be the author of this second epistle to the Thessalonians but, as in the first epistle, his two colleagues, Silas and Timothy, are mentioned with him in the opening verses of the epistle (II Thess. 1 : 1, 2). The real message, however, is from Paul. Paul is definitely assuming the responsibility for its content by writing with his own hands the concluding statements of the epistle (II Thess. 3 : 16-18) though he used, possibly, one of his colleagues as a scribe for the rest of the letter.

Paul's authorship of this letter has been questioned more than that of I Thessalonians. The ground on which it was rejected as a genuine Pauline writing was not, however, due to the absence of early references. There are quotations used by Ignatius. Polycarp of Smyrna, who died about 150 A.D. uses quotations from II Thessalonians (11 : 3, 1 : 4, 11 : 4 and 3 : 15) and definitely attributes its authorship to Paul. By some misunderstanding or because Thessaloniki is near to the Macedonian town of Philippi, Polycarp adds that the letter was sent by Paul to the Philippians. Justin Martyr, who was a contemporary of Polycarp, quotes from the same epistle (Dialogues 32: 12, 110: 6, 116: 5). Clement of Alexandria

and Tertullian also quote from the letter later in the second century. It was included in Marcion's collection of Paul's writings as well as in the old Latin and Syrian versions which date from the second century. Ireneus, Eusebius and other church fathers and authors testify for its genuineness. On the whole, ancient sources support Paul's authorship of the epistle.

There are strong internal witnesses in the epistle itself for the genuineness of the letter. The language used in both I and II Thessalonians is clearly and definitely Pauline. There are 362 words in the first epistle and 250 in the second, including all prepositions and particles. Out of these 612 words 146 are common in both letters. 82 percent of the 362 words in the first epistle and 86 percent of the 250 words of the second epistle are used in Paul's longer epistles which are commonly accepted as Pauline (Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians). In addition to these another 19 words of I Thessalonians and 7 of II Thessalonians are found in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon; therefore, 88 percent of the words in I Thessalonians and 89 percent of the words in II Thessalonians are found in his other epistles. There are only 37 words of I Thessalonians and 23 in the II Thessalonians which are not found in other Pauline writings. We find also in both epistles sentences which are characteristically Pauline, and which are found in other of his epistles. All evidences of language and style are rather overwhelmingly in favor of Paul's authorship.

The objections against its genuineness gather themselves around four assertions. One group asserts that for the most part II Thessalonians is but a repetition of I Thessalonians, and that it contains contradictory state-

ments concerning the second coming of Christ. The supporters of this view assert that only about one third of the material in this second epistle is new, namely 19 verses (1 : 5, 6, 9, 12; 2 : 2-9, 11, 12, 15; 3 : 2, 13, 14, 17) and that the rest of the epistle is a paraphrase, variation or an exposition of parallel passages of I Thessalonians. In fact about one third of the epistle is actually a repetition whereas two thirds of it is composed of new material. The author does not depend closely on I Thessalonians but freely makes use of what he has written in his previous letter.

The new material presented in the second epistle provides a basis for a second argument against the genuineness of this epistle. The peculiar statements about the "lawless" or "the man of sin", according to some ancient authorities, are said to be unlike Paul and are derived rather from the Apocalypse. There is not, however, much ground for this argument.

The supposed reference to a forged letter in the second verse of the second chapter is another ground for those who maintain that Paul was not the author of this epistle. When we take into consideration what opponents and ambitious, dreaming zealots could do and had been doing, a forged letter is a possibility, but at any rate not decisive evidence against the genuineness of this one.

The fourth group bases their assertion on certain variations of style which occur and which are said to be un-Pauline. "We are bound to give thanks to God" occurs twice (1 : 3, 2 : 13) as against the simple expressions "We give thanks to God" and "We thank God" (I Thess. 1 : 2, 2 : 13) which appear in the first epistle. One does not, however, have to search very hard to find such differences in other Pauline epistles (I and II Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians) and it is very natural

for a writer to use such variations of style. It would be rather amazing for a writer not to present some kind of change in his style and sentences. This argument is also basically contradictory to the first argument against Paul's authorship which is based on the repetitions of statements and material found in the first epistle.

It is indeed not simply difficult but rather impossible to find any real reason for a forger to write a letter based on I Thessalonians. We side, therefore, with the majority of the scholars who accept the Pauline authorship of the epistle.

Some scholars attempt to present the view that II Thessalonians was written before the epistle which we know as I Thessalonians. There is, however, clear evidence that some writing by the same author preceded this epistle (II Thess. 2 : 15). Since we know of no other letter, it is proper for us to infer that the letter to which Paul refers is I Thessalonians. The opening sentence of the second chapter of II Thessalonians, "Concerning our assembling to meet him", touches again upon a familiar subject which Paul has handled already (I Thess. 4 : 13-18). We also find a kind of expository comment and a fuller and extended exposition on the situation to come before the second advent of Christ, an event with which II Thessalonians is especially concerned. The subject in the minds of the Thessalonians concerned what would happen to their dear believers who had died before Christ's second coming. Paul, we should not forget, had treated this subject amply in the first epistle.

Since we agree that I Thessalonians preceded II Thessalonians, the question now arises as to how long a time elapsed between the writing of the two letters. One would admit that enough time must have elapsed for the first letter to get to Thessaloniki and for some

kind of report to be brought back. Whichever route the carrier of the letter had followed, whether by sea or land, it must have been several weeks, or months. In this case II Thessalonians must have been written soon after receiving the news from Thessaloniki (II Thess. 2 : 1, 2, 15 and cf. I Thess. 3 : 6). On the basis of Acts 18 : 1-5 and I Thess. 3 :6, Paul must have written his first letter to them shortly after arriving for his eighteen month stay in Corinth. We therefore assume that II Thessalonians was written within the first year of his stay in Corinth where Paul must have written both of his letters to the Thessalonians.

There are some scholars, however, who hold a different idea which is based on two other considerations. One group tends to bring the time of writing nearer to that of the first epistle whereas the other places it farther away. The reason for writing II Thessalonians is suggested in the epistle itself (II Thess. 2 : 2). Paul writes that it is to discredit a false letter and set the church aright in regard to its erroneous teaching. All that was necessary, therefore, to instigate the writing of this second letter was some news that the Thessalonians had received a letter and were in confusion as to its contents. This news could have reached Paul either by traveller or through a special delegation from Thessaloniki. In this case Paul would have written back at once without awaiting a return answer to his first epistle.

Some scholars hold the view that Paul's own position in regard to his eschatological teaching may have undergone a change between the time when he wrote his I Thessalonians and his II Thessalonians. They believe that I Thess. 4 : 15 means that Paul includes himself among the living at the time when Christ would return.

This would indicate that Paul expected the second advent would take place within his own life time. When he comes, however, to outline in II Thessalonians the program of events that are to precede the return of the Lord (II Thess. 2 : 2ff.), it is less clear that he expects this program to be carried out in his life time. He says that he has told them in person, when he was with them, of at least a part of this program. Scholars assert that up to this point (II Thess. 2 : 5) no change had occurred in his thinking. He also says that the Thessalonians know "what is restraining him" (II Thess. 2 : 6). To some scholars, however, the balance of the program seems to be new material communicated to the Thessalonians for the first time (II Thess. 2 : 6f.) and that in this material Paul does not indicate that he now anticipates the Lord's return within his own life time. On the contrary, such scholars believe that by his relating this somewhat detailed program of events which must first occur, he seems to indicate some uncertainty as to whether he would live to see their completion. They conclude, therefore, that if such a development of Paul's thinking actually took place, it would of course mean a longer interval between the two letters. There is, however, a fundamental mistake in these assertions. They have read I Thess. 4 : 15 as if Paul thought indeed that he would be still living when the Lord returned but, as we have already seen, this does not seem to be what Paul meant in this passage. He speaks of a possibility which includes even any who have died during the interval between the two epistles.

Some others hold the idea of a later day on the same basis that Paul had a fundamental change in his idea about the second coming. While he speaks in the first

epistle of the second advent being without any notice "like a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5 : 2), in the second epistle they assert that he speaks of many events that will have to precede His return. They thus see evidence of contradiction in what Paul says in his two letters. We must take into consideration that the signs that are going to precede Christ's coming, according to II Thess. 2 : 5f., refer to His return and do not contradict the suddenness of the event. Consider the travail that "comes upon a woman with child" (I Thess. 5 : 3); no matter how suddenly she may feel the pains, there are many signs beforehand. Christ Himself, speaking of the same eschatological subject in Mth. 24 : 43, says that it will be in the way a thief comes, and yet also that there will be many other signs as of the fig tree (Mth. 24 : 32-33). The suddenness must be understood only concerning the exact season and time (I Thess. 5 : 1, cf. Mth. 24 : 36). In all apocalyptic literature in the New Testament both elements, the suddenness of the Lord's coming and the signs preceding this event, go steadily together. A closer examination of II Thess. 2 : 5, 6 reveals that such were his teachings to them when he was in their midst. What may be considered as new material, therefore, may be new only in a written form.

Since some of the believers in Thessaloniki had died, the subject of Christ's second advent became of a special, intense, personal concern for the survivors of the deceased as they thought that those who had died would not have the same privilege as those who would be living at Christ's coming (cf. Acts 1 : 6-7). Paul in writing his I Thessalonians might have thought that he had cleared up any misconception on this subject (I Thess. 4 : 13-18) but either through a misunderstanding or a misinter-

pretation of what he had written, or possibly because of the circulation of a spurious letter attributed to Paul (this also explains why Paul takes such pains to identify II Thessalonians as genuinely his epistle 3 : 17-18), the church of Thessaloniki received the idea that the Lord's coming would be so soon that it was not necessary for them to keep busy with their daily tasks. What would be the profit of any enterprise if it were to be cut off in the midst of its course? So there was created much disorderliness due to a well meant but unwise enthusiasm which led the church members to stop working and become idle (II Thess. 2 : 17, 3 : 11). Their idleness soon proved to be not a mere harmless expectation of the Lord's return, for some very disturbing disorders and factions soon made their appearance with definite and selfish ends (II Thess. 3 : 6ff.). Doubts began to besiege some of the Thessalonians as to the validity of their new faith and the hope of the return of the Lord to organize His kingdom on earth (II Thess. 2 : 1-2). These, therefore, seem to be the reasons and the circumstances that made it necessary for Paul to write his second letter to them.

One finds no arguments about any of Paul's positions as one does, for example, in his epistle to the Romans. His emphasis is on the prominence of one God (II Thess. 1 : 3), that the Christian congregations are God's own churches (II Thess. 1 : 4), that there is an inevitable righteous judgment by God whose kingdom is to be a sure reality (II Thess. 1 : 5), and that God's punishment is for those who are disobedient to the gospel of Christ (II Thess. 1 : 8-9). There is also a fervent prayer for their spiritual welfare that Christ's name be glorified in their midst (II Thess. 1 : 11f.). Later in the epistle emphasis is laid upon a grave sin committed by some

person attempting to rival God; the rival one, Paul says, is to be utterly destroyed (II Thess. 2 : 4, 8). This is of a special importance as we remember that the Thessalonians, at least most of them, were but recently worshipers of many Gods and idols (I Thess. 1 : 9). A great section of the letter is devoted to the second advent of the Lord (II Thess. 2 : 1ff.), while no reference whatsoever is made to His first advent nor directly to His life and teachings. There is a characteristic sternness on the part of Paul (II Thess. 3 : 6, 10, 12, 14) which is absent in his first epistle (cf. I Thess. 5 : 14) and yet there is also a characteristic touch of patient forbearance (II Thess. 3 : 15).

In reviewing the main problems presented by the epistle, we see that in chapter one Paul expresses gratitude for their unshakable and growing faith and for their steadfastness in spite of the persecutions and afflictions (II Thess. 1 : 3, 4). There is also an expression acknowledging his former labor in their midst (II Thess. 1 :10 b) and a prayer that they may prove themselves worthy of God's calling (II Thess. 1 : 11). In chapter three he covets their prayers for the furtherance of God's word and for the deliverance of them, the apostle and his saintly company, from wicked and evil men. He goes on to deal with some specific problems of disorderly conduct and idleness for which he gives different admonitions and advice. The core of the letter seems to be in chapter two which is concerned with some current misconceptions regarding the return of Christ. Paul, in wanting to clear up these misunderstandings, gives a detailed list of certain events that must precede the Lord's second advent (II Thess. 2: 3). In the program of events the following have a major share: 1) a falling away from

the faith (II Thess. 2 : 3), 2) the appearance of the man of sin (II Thess. 2 : 3, 8), 3) appearance of the restrainer (II Thess. 2 : 6), 4) the activities of the lawless one (II Thess. 2 : 7), and 5) the removal of the restrainer (II Thess. 2 : 7).

The program may be constructed in two parts:

I. The present actors
 A. the man of lawlessness at work secretly (II Thess. 2 : 7)
 B. the restrainer opposing the secret activities of the man of lawlessness (II Thess. 2 : 7)

II. The future actors and events
 A. the falling away (II Thess. 2 : 3)
 B. the removal of the restrainer (II Thess. 2 : 7)
 C. the complete revealing of the man of lawlessness and his unhindered activities (II Thess. 2 : 8)
 D. the Lord's return and victory over the lawless man (II Thess. 2 : 8)

The interpretation of the program is difficult because of its apparently guarded vagueness. As a Jew, Paul would have inherited a certain amount of eschatological teachings. W. Lock writes,

> There lay behind him the history of the doctrine the following stages, 1) A common Oriental myth of a struggle between the power of evil, represented by a dragon (Bab, Tiamat) and the Creator of the world (Marduk), in which the dragon had been bound, but would revive for another conflict with God before the end of the world. . .The connexion of this with the following is only a conjecture, but a very possible conjecture. 2) A Jewish expectation, springing up

> during the Exile, of an attack upon Israel by foes led by some human leader or (later) Satan or Beliar, which would be frustrated either by J" or the Messiah. Such a victory is described in Ezk. 38. Something similar recurs in the prophecies of Daniel (7. 8 and 11) about the conflict with Antiochus Epiphanes. The expectation did not cease with the death of Antiochus; it was applied to the thought of deliverance from the Roman Empire in 2 Es. 5 : 1, Ps-Sol. 17,. . . 3) This anticipation had become Christian. Our Lord had contemplated a leader 'coming in his own name' (Jn 5 : 43) and demanding allegiance; some person, 'the abomination of desolation, standing in the holy place (Mth. 24 : 15)'; many false prophets, a growth of lawlessness, a destruction of Jerusalem, and a coming of the Son of Man (Mt. 24, Mk. 13, Lk. 21). (James Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. IV, pg. 747f.).

There are many and differing interpretations of the statements and actors or participants in the events. It is very probable that the man of lawlessness stands for the general Jewish opposition to the Christian movement with its headquarters in the temple at Jerusalem (II Thess. 2 : 4). The restrainer might be the Roman government which especially affected Paul because of his Roman citizenship and proved a protection to Christians by means of the well developed and organized military system and the Roman regard for law and order. The Jews were indeed taking part in a somewhat hidden disorderliness and persecution as is mentioned on various occasions (Acts 21 : 31f., 22 : 25). The falling away, some think, may equal the final rejection by the Jews

of Jesus as their Messiah, but it most probably refers rather to a Christian apostasy. In such an interpretation the removal of the restrainer would be the change in attitude of the Roman Empire which occurred later. The complete revelation of the lawless man or, as he has been know, the man of sin is still to be a future event, as is also the Lord's return.

PARAPHRASE OF II THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER ONE

Verse 1 Paul, Silas and Timothy write to you, the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 2 May loving kindness, peace and serenity abound in you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 3 We find it necessary to give thanks for you constantly, brethren, as it is proper or right that we should because your conviction and trust (faith) in God is growing exceedingly and your genuine love for each other super-

Verse 4 abounds. We take pride in you as we find ourselves among the churches of God because of your endurance and your faith (confidence) which you demonstrate by daringly enduring

Verse 5 all your persecutions and afflictions. For you to suffer all these things is God's righteous judgment for you to be made worthy to have a part in His kingdom for which you are suffer-

Verse 6 ing. It is just for God to repay those who

Verse 7 burden you with afflictions, and it is right to give you who are afflicted relief, together with us, when the Lord Jesus shall appear from heaven with the messengers (angels) of His

Verse 8 dominion, or power, arrayed in flames declaring and putting into effect His just resolution to those who know not God and who refuse to be

Verse 9 obedient to the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They

will pay what is a right result for such disobedience by being shut out forever from the presence of the Lord Jesus and from ever beholding His face or seeing the dignity and
Verse 10 splendor of His mighty authority when He will come to be honored by His saints and be regarded with awe and wonder by all of you who have believed that our message was true
Verse 11 and accepted it as such. We are constantly praying that our God may find that you have been worthy of His calling so that He will fulfill completely through and by His might
Verse 12 His desire for goodness and work of faith so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ be glorified by you and you too be glorified by Him in accordance to the loving kindness (grace) of our God and Master (Lord) Jesus Christ.

ON THE TEXT OF II THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER ONE

Verses 1 and 2

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .The original text reads "Paul and. . ." These verses differ from the opening verses of I Thessalonians in that Paul adds the pronoun "our" to Father and the phrase "from God the Father. . .Christ" which indicates the source of the divine grace and peace included in the salutation.

Verse 3

We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, . . . The word "bound", *ὀφείλομεν* (opheilomen) indicates a strong inner feeling, a deep sense of moral obligation, which reveals the subjective reason for thanking God always for them. *as it is fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, . . .καθὼς ἄξιόν ἐστιν* (kathos axion estin), as it is fitting, does not refer to the form or the quantity of the thankfulness but explains the reason for this thankfulness. A sense of real justice provokes in the apostles a feeling of gratitude because the faith of the Thessalonians is growing *ὑπεραυξάνει* (hyperauxanei) in great abundance. This sense of duty which binds the apostles is not unrelated to the fact that their labor has had such a special success; they cannot but rejoice at their achievement. *and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. . .πλεονάζει*

(pleonazei) means "superabounds" more than "increasing". The gospel has found its true practical value in the social life of the Thessalonians. One feels Paul is stressing here not only the virtue of love but also the real value of the feeling of being loved; a mutual love superabounds.

Verse 4

*Therefore we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith. . .*The original word ἐνκαυχᾶσθαι (enkauhasthae) means a much more emphatic type of boasting than the simple καυχᾶσθαι (kauhasthae), to boast. "Steadfastness", ὑπομονῆς (hypomonis), means an inner endurance or patience which precedes faith. The endurance and patience is the ground work which supports and maintains true faith. *in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring. . . .*"for you", ὑπὲρ (hyper), is used instead of ἀντὶ (anti) which means "on behalf of you". The word "enduring" is used here, instead of ἀνέχεσθε (anehesthe), which not only means tolerating in passive resistance but also daring and actively holding up. The construction of the Greek text indicates that the earlier persecutions had been repeated and that they were still continuing at the time of the writing of the epistle.

Verse 5

*This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering— . . .*This verse should not be the beginning of a new paragraph. By referring to what is said just above, one is helped to understand this verse and is helped to see the basic Christian teaching that the

way to the kingdom of God "is narrow", a way of suffering, the way of the cross.

Verse 6

since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, . . ."Since", εἴπερ (eiper), which means "if really" or "if indeed", implies not doubt, but sureness. The real retribution to the afflictors is fully stated in verse 9 below.

Verse 7

and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, . . ."with us to you" is a very tender and gentle expression with no feeling of superiority but only a full sense of community and oneness in sharing the same form of life experience and future hopes. Paul and his colleagues are united with the Thessalonian believers in this deep sense of common identity. "with mighty angels", μετ' ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως (met angelon dynameos), might be translated in another way. δυνάμεως, dynameos, (the genitive form of might or power) seems to have as its subject αὐτοῦ (autou), his, and not the angels. The angels are of His own might or dominion. The whole description is awesome and majestic with the symbolic expressions of divine glory which are unsurpassed and unimaginable power that no one has ever seen (cf. Ex. 3 : 2, 19 : 18, I Cor. 3 : 13). What may be terrifying for the unbelievers is, on the contrary, a relieving hope and strength to the believers.

Verse 8

inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God

and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. . . .The text says, *διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν* (didontos ekdikisin), which means settling a judgment or giving a final just verdict. This phrase has, however, been rendered as "inflicting vengeance". Note that Paul says on those "who do not know God" not "who do not know about God". Those who do not know God are closely related to those who are disobeying the message of God which He has sent to men. Intellectual knowledge about God cannot replace real filial knowledge of His strength and will.

Verse 9

They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, . . .This verse needs careful scrutiny for an understanding of Paul's mind concerning the punishment of the wicked. The text says, *τίσουσιν* (tisousin), which literally means "paying what is right or fitting" and thus makes this punishment a real justice with a satisfying act of payment. "Destruction", *ὄλεθρον* (olethron), means the destruction of living beings in death with some violence. "The exclusion from the presence of the Lord", *ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ Κυρίου* (apo prosopou tou Kyriou), or literally "from the face of the Lord" qualifies the meaning which Paul gives to *ὄλεθρον* (olethron), destruction. The exact meaning of a spiritual death is to be detached from the source of the spiritual life, to live without communion and fellowship with the Lord Himself; it is not annihilation. The exact opposite of this is real life as in I Thess. 4 : 17 (cf. John 17 : 3).

Verse 10

when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because

our testimony to you was believed. . . ."Glorified in his saints" might mean "among his saints", or "by his saints". "To be marveled at in all who believe" might also be "to be marveled by all the believers" which would change the meaning from a passive display to an active marveling or glorifying.

Verse 11

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfill every good resolve and work of faith by his power, . . ."His call" may mean the calling or the invitation which God extended to them (cf. Eph. 4 : 1). The apostles prayed that the Thessalonian Christians would not fail in living up to what they had been called to do and thus that they would prove themselves worthy of their invitation. It may also refer to God meaning that God might accomplish in them "by his power" or *ἐν δυνάμει* (en dynamei), in power mightily, His holy will and purpose. He would fulfill His own purpose in them as well as the work of faith which was primarily for their own salvation. The only obstacle for such a work of grace and love is a negative attitude in the person's will. God can never violate the basic attribute of man's life namely his will.

Verse 12

so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. ... There is a stress on the mutual interdependence of Christ and His believers regarding the glory to be shared. It will be real honor and glory for Christ to have such believers, and it will also be a glory and a delight to have such a Lord and Master as a result of willingly deciding to be His believers.

PARAPHRASE OF II THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER TWO

Verse 1 Now brethren, we beseech you in regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our
Verse 2 assembling together to meet Him, do not change your mind too quickly concerning the faith or His reappearing nor be disturbed or alarmed by any oral message or teaching or letter, like the one you received from us, suggesting that the day on which He is to come has already
Verse 3 come, or is just about to come. Do not let any man deceive you in any way; that day will not come until there has been an apostasy in which many will fall away from the faith and take a negative attitude towards God, and until the man of "sin", who has an utter disregard for law and order and who is the unique instigator of destruction for himself and many others, has
Verse 4 shown himself. This man of sin has the attitude of opposing and exalting himself with pride over every so-called god, or object of reverence, so that he takes his seat as God in the temple trying
Verse 5 to prove that he himself indeed is God. Do you not remember that I was telling you all this while
Verse 6 I was still in your midst? And now you know well what restrains the lawless one so that he will be revealed only at the time which is appointed
Verse 7 for him. For now the secret agent is putting into effect his vicious plans for the time when
Verse 8 the restrainer is not in the way. At that time

there shall appear the person with the deep rooted contempt and disregard of law and order whom I mentioned already and whom the Lord will stamp out by the breath of His mouth and entirely dispel his influence by the glorious manifestation of His presence.

Verse 9 This lawless and wicked one who is activated by the initiative and power of Satan will show
Verse 10 up with power to do signs and deceiving wonders, and with every kind of deception based on injustice which will prevail among the perishing ones because they do not want to accept the love of truth in order to be
Verse 11 saved. For this reason God will allow them to wander about aimlessly and to believe or commit themselves, if they so will, to falsehood,
Verse 12 so they all will be judged for having surrendered themselves not to the truth but, readily and with delight, to unrighteousness.

Verse 13 We find it necessary to give thanks to God constantly, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has chosen you, by giving you the privilege to become the first converts of our work in your midst and to be saved through the separating and purifying work of the Holy
Verse 14 Spirit and through your faith in the truth. He called you through our message so that you might share the dignity and glory of our Lord
Verse 15 Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, remain steadfast and keep carefully and faithfully the traditions of which you were instructed by our word or by our letter.

Verse 16 But now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and

God our Father, Who loved us and you and Who has given to us all eternal comfort and good hope through His loving kindness,
Verse 17 comfort your hearts and strengthen you morally and spiritually in every work and good word.

ON THE TEXT OF II THESSALONIANS
CHAPTER TWO

Verses 1 and 2

*Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. . . .*Paul warns the Thessalonians in these two verses against the danger of surrendering all faith in Christianity because the Lord's coming seems deferred. The Thessalonians believed that the day on which the Lord was to return was at hand and they lived in daily expectation of this event. Days, weeks, months and maybe even a year had passed, however, and still there was no evidence of His coming. Some were, therefore, questioning their beliefs, they were "excited", θροεῖσθαι (throeisthae), meaning that they were troubled or alarmed, and others seemed ready to give up their beliefs as delusion "quickly shaken in mind".

Paul urges them not to be led astray in their thinking. "Either by spirit" refers to local prophets in the church of Thessaloniki who spoke on this issue which seemed so near every heart and mind in that church (cf. I Thess. 5 : 20-22 and the study of these verses). "Or by word" Paul uses to mean a teacher in the local church (cf. I Cor. 12 : 28 and note the similar order) who in his zeal and enthusiasm might have led the congregation to erroneous deductions and conclusions. The third possible cause for the mistaken ideas is "by letter purporting to be

from us". One might accept the view that, even at such an early date, there might have been a forged letter, but the text does not justify fully such an assumption. Paul might be referring to his own epistle, either his first one or the present one. He might be referring to the instructions on this matter in the epistle that could be misunderstood and misinterpreted. In II Peter 3 : 16 Peter says about Paul's epistles, "There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction". Nothing excludes the possibility that such a misinterpetation of his letters could have happened in Thessaloniki. Such misinterpretation is hardly surprising when we witness today many serious scholars who carefully scrutinize every word in the text and yet assert that indeed Paul definitely meant in I Thessalonians that the Lord's return would take place very soon, in fact in his own life time, while no text supports firmly such a view.

Verse 3

*Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, and the son of perdition, . . .*Paul warns the Thessalonians to mistrust anyone who tries to deceive them concerning the day of the second advent. He says that the Lord's coming will not take place until first the "rebellion comes", ἡ ἀποστασία (he apostasia), meaning the apostasy or the wide spread defiance of Christian faith. "The man of lawlessness" must secondly appear. This is a Jewish idiomatic expression meaning ἄνομος (anomos), the lawless one. Paul also mentions that "the son of perdition" must come which is another

Jewish idiomatic expression meaning ὁ ἀπολλύμενος (ho apolymenos) or the perishing one.

Verse 4

*who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. . . .*Third in the series of events before the coming of the Lord will be a decided opposition which will rival God for the supreme place and worship. In the meantime the "lawless one", who is now restrained, will be active.

Verse 5

*Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? . . .*Here Paul mildly rebukes the Thessalonians because they do not remember what he told them when he was in their midst. "I told you this", he reminds them. This is not new. "This" is ταῦτα (tauta), a plural meaning "these things", the things which he said in verses 3 and 4.

Verse 6

*And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. . . .*It is worth noticing that St. Augustine declares ignorance about who this restrainer is. John Calvin and others think that the restrainer is the great command of the Master that the gospel should first be preached to all the nations (Mth. 24 : 14, Mk. 13 : 10). This work had just begun, outside a comparatively small area of Asia, and therefore it would naturally be a restrainer. Most probably, however, Paul had in mind the Roman government with its laws, forces and authority which was personalized by the emperor as the

restrainer. The emperor, in this case, proved to be truly a restrainer of the lawless Jews who perpetuated the persecutions against the Christians.

Verse 7

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. . . .The lawlessness was already secretly at work among the Christians. Wherever the gospel was being preached and new converts were being made, secret plans were being laid by secret agents to undermine the work of the Christians and to persecute them in many ways.

Verse 8

And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming. . . ."Will slay. . .and destroy him" does not denote wiping out of life or existence; it means, καταργήσει (katargisei), to make him of no effect, useless and impotent as if he were not in existence. The Lord will destroy him by His spoken word (cf. John 12 : 46-48). Insincerity, deceiving motives, and unreal and false life crumble before the simple honest words of an honest life; since God is truth, all untruth will be at once revealed to itself in His presence.

Verse 9

The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, . . .This verse is rendered differently by various translators and commentators. A close examination of

the text tells us that the lawless one is not to be expected but that he "is already here" due to Satan's initiative and active energy. "With all power, *ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει* (en pasi dynamei), is referring to the dynamic initiative of the instigator Satan. This power is demonstrated with signs and wonders which are all "pretended", *ψεύδους* (pseudous), meaning that they are false in their nature and deceiving in their purpose.

Verse 10

and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. . . ."And all wicked deception", *καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀδικίας* (kai en pasi apati adikias), means literally "in every (kind of) deception of injustice"; that is, based on or proceeding from injustice. The genitive *ἀδικίας* (adikias), or injustice, denotes the source or origin of the deception. In other words Paul says that the lawless one, who is inspired by injustice, will deceive. "For those who are to perish", *ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις* (en tois apolymenis), presents some problems. Some ancient authorities do not have the preposition *ἐν* (en). If we accept the text without *ἐν* (en), then the verse would say that all deception of the injustice will be among the perishing ones. If we prefer the text with the preposition *ἐν* (en), then the effectiveness, or validity, of all the deceptive deeds of the lawless will be only among the perishing ones. "The truth", *τῆς ἀληθείας* (tis alithias), is objective genitive and refers not to truth generally but to the specific truth of God (cf. Ro. 1 : 25, II Cor. 11 : 10, Gal. 2 : 5). *οὐκ ἐδέξαντο* (ouk edexanto), "did not accept", indicates that God has labored to help them choose the love for "truth", "to be saved", but that they

willed not to accept the offer of this laborious effort.

This verse presents the special controversial theological issue of election and predestination, and helps us to understand better Paul's mind on this subject. Paul clearly states that "those who are to perish" or rather, "the perishing ones" have been offered the opportunity, or choice, of a better life which is the meaning of "to be saved", but that they deliberately reject the offer, "they refused to love the truth" in order to be saved. We will continue the discussion of these controversial issues in verse 13 below.

Verse 11

*Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, . . .*The text of this verse presents considerable difficulty and must be viewed in relation to Paul's whole Christian teaching. In studying the New Testament records we are often compelled to confront difficulties caused by minor additions to a text or by a word with several meanings. We must overcome these difficulties by finding the meaning which leads to the whole systematic teaching, body of ideas, or philosophy.

It is hard to accept the interpretation that Paul, who believed and taught that God is a holy and loving Father and that He is the Light that none can ever approach (cf. I Tim. 6 : 16), would fit into his systematic thought the idea that God "sends a strong delusion" upon any human being. This is contradictory not only to God's holiness but also to any sense of justice and moral responsibility. There is no room in the whole Christian teaching of the New Testament for such a notion. It is definitely contradictory to the whole gospel of God's

love, mercy and grace to men. No doubt Paul shares with James the conviction that "God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one" (James 1 : 13). God is absolutely holy and there can be no blemish on Him.

The trouble in this verse seems to arise from the unhappy choice of words. The word πέμπει (pempi) has the meaning "sends" but also has the meaning of ἀφήνω (afino) (*Demetrakou Greek Dictionary* vol. 7, pg. 5632), whose classical form is ἀφίημι (afiimi), which used in its imperative form in the Lord's Prayer is rendered as "forgive us" or let go or leave. It thus has the sense of not prohibiting or of permitting (*Ibid.*, vol. 2, Pg. 1240). If we change "sends" to one of these other meanings, then the whole idea of the verse is very different. One is immediately reminded of the idea which lies behind Job 1 : 8-12. The Lord does not prohibit Satan from tempting Job but lets him try his own way. Paul says, therefore, in this verse that God uses no force or any means of bias to prevent a moral or spiritual event from taking place. Those who are perishing are not and shall not be ignorant of why and what is happening, for God does not intervene in any way to prohibit man from exercising his free choice. The real sense of justice presupposes a real freedom of choice and consequently full knowledge of reasons and their effects. God will not send strong delusion upon them, but He will let them go, just as he did the prodigal son, to be led by the ἐνέργεια πλάνης (energia planis), the energy of going astray or wandering about, so that their surrender to the lies of the lawless one are an act of their unrestrained and uninterrupted freedom of choice.

Verse 12

so that all may be condemned who did not believe the

truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. . . ."So that all may be condemned", *ἵνα κριθῶσιν πάντες* (hina krithosin pantes), means literally that all be brought to judgment, or judgment be imposed on all. Both those who did not believe the truth and those who made with delight and pleasure sinfulness and unrighteousness by their deliberate choice will bring judgment upon themselves.

Verse 13

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the spirit and belief in the truth. .. . For a discussion of "we are bound to give thanks". . .see II Thess. 1 : 3 above. Concerning the election by God unto salvation, "because God chose you from the beginning to be saved" see the comment on I Thess. 1 : 4.

Many scholars and commentators find in this verse a sound ground for a belief in predestination. The best authorities (eg. Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 22nd edition) use the text, *εἵλατο ὑμᾶς ὁ Θεός ἀπαρχήν* (heilato hymas ho Theos aparchin). The word *ἀπαρχήν* (aparchin) does not mean "from the beginning" referring to the infinite past as "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1 : 1), but denotes a starting point in a historical process or setting, just a beginning: the first one. Paul says, "Now, brethren, you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia", *ὅτι ἐστιν ἀπαρχή* (oti estin aparchi) (I Cor. 16 : 15). In this context the verb (esti) demands the nominative *ἀπαρχή* (aparchi) meaning the starting point, or the beginning, of his work. In Romans 8 : 23 we have *τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος* (tin aparchin tou pneumatos) an accusative

which is rendered in the Revised Standard Version as "we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the spirit". In the New English Bible (1961) this same verse is translated "We, to whom the Spirit is given as first fruits of the harvest to come" which gives a numerical sense to the beginning or starting point. The nominative ἀπαρχὴ (aparchi) is found again in Romans 11 : 16 and is rightly rendered by the New English Bible as "If the first portion [ἀπαρχὴ (aparchi)] of dough is consecrated". The same word is rendered by the Revised Standard Version in I Cor. 15 : 20, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep", and in verse 23 "Christ the first fruits, ἀπαρχὴ (aparchi), then at his coming those who belong to Christ" which denotes a sequence or an order in which events will happen. We have the same word again in the accusative as in our text in James 1 : 18, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures". A more simple and correct way of expressing this would be to say "to be a beginning" or "to be the first ones".

In all of these cases there seems to be some misunderstanding of the idea of the "first fruits". Although the "first fruits" is clearly and definitely related with the idea or practice of sacrificing or offering to God, there is no notion of sacrifice in any of the cases we have mentioned. It is used simply to indicate the start, the beginning, the first ones or the starting ones in a series (*Demetrakou Greek Dictionary, vol.* 1, pg. 722).

In this verse in the letter to the Thessalonians Paul uses ἀπαρχὴν (aparchin) to refer to the Thessalonians as among the first of the churches and the first of the converts. The Thessalonians were among the first on the

European continent to be given the opportunity and the privilege of being saved in sanctification wrought by the Holy Spirit and by faith. Even if we were to accept the less authoritative writing, ἀπαρχῆς (aparchis), the meaning would not and should not change. It would always mean that the Thessalonians were "a starting point".

Verse 14

*To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .*To this salvation in sanctification of the faith "he called you" means that He extended an open invitation to them giving them the opportunity to accept or reject. By accepting the message of the gospel preached to them, they either functioned to the glory of the Lord Jesus (if we accept that the genitive δόξης (doxis), glory, is objective) or they became partakers of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (if it is a subjective genitive). Either or both of these interpretations would be correct.

Verse 15

*So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter. . . .*Paul points out a practical duty, as opposed to his advice that they not be shaken, alarmed, or troubled. He says that they should stand firm and hold fast to the things which have been disclosed to them either orally, when he was in their midst, or in the letter, not letters, he has written to them.

Verses 16 and 17

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our

Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. . . .These two verses are an earnest wish and prayer mildly toned with antithesis. *Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Κύριος* (autos the ho Kyrios), but he the Lord, indicates that man's own good intention, will and efforts are not enough. God has an indispensable part in the effectiveness of man's will by the work He does in the hearts of the believers.

PARAPHRASE OF II THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER THREE

Verse 1 Now then what is left to be said, brethren, pray for us so that the word of God may move forward in spite of all obstacles and that it be honored and glorified just as it
Verse 2 was among you, and pray also that we may be saved from unreasonable men because the
Verse 3 faith has not made its appeal to all men. He remains ever faithfully by us all, and He will support, strengthen and protect you from
Verse 4 the evil that is round about us. We have such confidence and assurance in what the Lord is doing for you, that we believe you are faithfully doing now the things which we told you to do, and that you will continue to do
Verse 5 them. We pray that the Lord will direct your hearts unto the love of God and to the patience which Christ Himself showed and in which He is strengthening you.

Verse 6 Now we advise you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, brethren, that you withdraw the privilege of your society and fellowship from every brother who conducts himself disorderly and not according to the precepts
Verse 7 we gave you. For you yourselves know that it is necessary or appropriate for you to imitate us, because we did not conduct ourselves in an unbecoming manner among you
Verse 8 (or in a disorderly way). Neither did we impose

our boarding on any man, but through toil and hard labor we worked night and day in order that we might not be a burden on any
Verse 9 of you. We did so, not because we do not have the right to be supported by those among whom we work, but because we wanted to make ourselves an example for you (that you also should imitate us and that none of you should give up his work or business and ex-
Verse 10 pect to be supported by others). When we were still with you, we told you that if a man
Verse 11 would not work, he should not eat either. I mention this because we have a report that some among you are conducting themselves disorderly, that they have given up their work and that they are busying themselves with the affairs of others which are not their
Verse 12 business. Now we recommend and urge through the Lord Jesus Christ that such people go about their work with a quiet spirit and that
Verse 13 they eat the bread they have earned. But you, brethren, do not get tired or weary of doing good even to those ones.

Verse 14 If any man refuses to obey our injunctions in this letter notice that man and refrain from having close or frequent relationships or fellowship with him, in order that he may realize the unworthiness of his wrong conduct.
Verse 15 Think not of him as an enemy but counsel him as a brother.

Verse 16 Now may the Lord Who is the source of peace give you peace forever in every way. May the Lord be with you all.

Verse 17 The affectionate salutation of me, Paul, is written with my own hand which, as I write it now, is the token in every epistle that it is
Verse 18 my own. The loving kindness (grace) of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

ON THE TEXT OF II THESSALONIANS — CHAPTER THREE

Verse 1

Finally, brethren, pray for us, . . ."Finally", τὸ λοιπὸν (to loipon), now for that which is left to be said, "pray for us". He has just raised an earnest prayer for them in the preceding verse and now he covets their prayers. He certainly relies on their prayers (cf. Ro. 15 : 30, Col. 4 : 3, 18, Philemon 22), but at the same time, by coveting their prayers he reminds the Thessalonians that they are not the only ones that have a hard time. Paul's primary aim is always, however, the success of the work of the gospel, *that the word of the Lord may speed on* . . .(cf. I Cor. 9 : 24). "Speed on", τρέχῃ (trechi), indicates a rapid forward movement in spite of all obstacles; it denotes a real race with difficulties and obstacles involved. *and triumph as it did among you,* . . ."triumph" literally means "glorify", δοξάζηται (doxazitai). "As it did among you", καθὼς καὶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς (kathos kai pros hymas), is a very favorable comment for them, but even more it indicates that the course of the word of the Lord should continue to go forward and, (kai) καὶ, even in their midst it has a long way to go.

Verse 2

and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men; . . ."Wicked", ἀτόπων (atopon), means unworthy of place, out of place, absurd, difficult to deal with or illogical. The definite article τῶν (ton) indicates that he does not speak in an impersonal way but that he has

in mind some definite persons who were a nuisance to him. Evil persons, *πονηρῶν* (poniron), has the original meaning of persons who cause fatigue, exhaustion because of their ill, bad will or character. *for not all have faith. . . .οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἡ πίστις* (ou gar panton hi pistis) explains how it happens that such persons indeed exist. The genitive *πάντων* (panton), all, may be possessive or objective; either it is not for all to have the faith or it is not all who have faith, faith has not made its real appeal to all.

Verse 3

But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from evil. . . .He does not say that God will release them from their difficulties and afflictions but he assures them of God's unfailing hand which will support, strengthen and guard them.

Verse 4

And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things which we command. . . .Paul has stressed the fact that God will do His part, the part that they cannot do, but here he stresses that they, themselves, have to do their part. God's grace is wrought in cooperation between God and man; God gives and man receives; God speaks, man listens; God guides but man follows; God gives the strength and man works.

Verse 5

May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. . . ."The steadfastness of Christ" is the wondrous patience which He himself

showed forth in His own life and which has become the model of faith for all believers.

Verse 6

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . .This command does not really indicate an authoritative command or order of a superior to an inferior. Its spirit is a brotherly exhortation of passing on a message. *Παραγγέλομεν* (parangelomen) has the original meaning of a command apart from any military or governmental order or command. This message is passed on not on Paul's own authority but as a brother in the name of Christ. Paul commands, *that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.* . . ."Keep away", *στέλλεσθαι ὑμᾶς* (stelesthae hymas), means withdraw and make a separation to bring about a moral result (cf. verses 11 and 13 below). "In idleness", *ἀτάκτως* (ataktos), which is literally disorderly.

Verse 7

For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; . . ."Ought", *δεῖ* (thei), means that it is necessary, it is proper, appropriate or it is becoming and is used always in an impersonal sense. You know how necessary or appropriate it is for you to imitate us. *we were not idle when we were with you,* . . ."We were not idle", *οὐκ ἠτακτήσαμεν* (ouk ataktisamen), is "we did not behave disorderly".

Verses 8 and 9

we did not eat any one's bread without paying. . . .The Greek text says, "nor did we eat free bread". This does

not mean that they would refuse to be guests at someone's table, but that their work was a real *toil and labor*, that they, as he puts it, *worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you.* Paul adds, *it was not because we have not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate.*

Verse 10

For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If any one will not work, let him not eat. . . . "We gave you this command", παρηγγέλλομεν (paringelomen), is to recommend or instruct. Paul is directing his words to the man who is able but unwilling to work.

Verse 11

For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. . . The Apostle has rather recently ("we hear") had news that "certain ones", τινὰς (tinas), referring to those who are mentioned in verse 6, are walking, περιπατοῦντας (peripatoustas) in a disorderly way, ἀτάκτως (ataktos), are "doing" or "working nothing" but are busying themselves in the affairs of others, or others' business.

Verse 12

*Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living. . . .*He now addresses himself to these lazy ones in the third person making his own comments more impersonal. He asks them to be quiet and not cause more disturbances and disorderliness by indulging in turbulent discussion or argumentation about the second advent. He advises them to "eat their own bread" or earn their own living as the text renders it.

Verse 13

*Brethren, do not be weary in well-doing. . . .*The text says, "But you brethren", *ὑμεῖς δὲ ἀδελφοί* (hymeis the adelphi), showing that Paul now addresses himself to those of the brethren who are sober and diligent in keeping faithfully at their own work. These apparently are the majority of the church in Thessaloniki. A Christian, Paul reminds them, should never become bored or weary by doing always what is good for others. Paul definitely suggests here that those who walk in an orderly way should not close their loving and kind hearts to the disorderly ones.

Verse 14

*If any one refuses to obey what we say in this letter, note that man, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. . . .*Paul confronts the case that may arise by the unwillingness of any of the disorderly ones to comply to his recommendations. He suggests that any disobedient one should be marked. His real intention is not to make him an outcast, but to deal with him in such a way that he will be helped and be won to the better Christian way of living. He does not really say "have nothing to do with him" but suggests to them, *μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι αὐτῷ* (mi synanigniesthe auto), which means not to have close or frequent dealings or relationships with him. Under the pressure of public opinion, Paul hopes that the disobedients may come to their senses, even to the feeling of shame concerning their unsuitable and unworthy conduct.

Verse 15

Do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a

brother. . . .Paul continues to give his advice to the believers about those whose lives are dissident. He says that they should not sever themselves from an idle person as if he were an antagonistic enemy, but that they should "warn him as a brother", counsel as a brother, *νουθετεῖτε* (nouthetiete), and try to show him that he is a brother but not a very good brother.

Verse 16

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all. . . .Paul realizes that his exhortation and message may not resolve the situation presented in verses 5 through 15. Paul's prayer is that the Lord give them, their brotherhood, the peace and harmony which only the Lord can give (cf. John 14 : 27).

Verse 17

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write. . . ."Greetings", *ὁ ἀσπασμὸς* (ho aspasmos), denotes more than a salutation. It is an expression of love upon leaving. In I Thessalonians 5 : 26 he says, "Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss". *ἀσπασμὸς* (aspasmos) usually includes this kind of caress and kiss. Paul writes these last words of salutation with his own hand as a sign or a token that the letter comes from him and that he is responsible for what has been written. The message expresses his own genuine thoughts and mind.

Verse 18

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. . . .The closing benediction differs from the one in I Thessalonians by the addition of *πάντων* (panton), all excluding none, and means to include even the disorderly ones.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE TEXT OF II THESSALONIANS

Paul's Special Concerns in the Epistle

1. Paul writes to the Thessalonians to make them aware of his continued gratitude for their patience and faithfulness shown even under severe persecutions (1 : 3ff and 2 : 13-15).
2. He realizes that his teaching concerning the Lord's second advent caused certain misconceptions, and he hastens to correct them. He tells the Thessalonians that Christ's return may not be immediate and, therefore, they must not lose faith but must be diligent about their own duties and businesses. In doing so he uses an apocalyptic language which presents problems in understanding to the modern reader, but which the recipients of his letter had no difficulty in understanding (2 : 1ff.).
3. The furtherance of the gospel of God is Paul's life concern. He seems very eager to secure the prayerful support of the Thessalonians for this end (3 : 1-2).
4. He is much concerned about some disorderly conduct in the Thessalonian church and gives them specific directions in dealing successfully with these disorders (3 : 6ff.).

What Contribution does this Epistle Make to an Understanding of Paul's Theology?

1. It gives Paul's view about God's righteous judgment which brings the retribution that sin deserves (1 : 5ff.). The greatest of all these retributions is the exclusion from His presence (1 : 9).
2. It stresses the fact that God does not impose His will but allows man to make his own deliberate choice. Man is free to love, to do and to believe what he wills (2 : 10-11).
3. In the believers, however, Paul points out that it is God who works through them. It is God's own power activated in the life of the believer that makes him prove himself worthy of his calling. If man does not take an attitude against God's gospel but yields to it, he is led to the kind of life which fits him best, to real salvation (2 : 11, 3 : 13, 17).
4. It shows that God works through men who proclaim His gospel as the apostles did (2 : 14).
5. It emphasizes the fidelity of God in strengthening and guarding the believers (3 : 3).
6. It points out that God accepts prayers of intercession (3 : 1-2).
7. It shows that God's work is not spread immediately over all the world but starts rather at an initial point and place (2 : 13).
8. It delineates the events which are to take place before the return of Christ. This sequence of events denotes a needed span of time (2 : 3ff.).

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION ON THE TEXT OF II THESSALONIANS

1. On what grounds has Paul's authorship of II Thessalonians been questioned? How serious are these accusations?
2. How do you account for any misunderstanding in what Paul had written earlier to the Thessalonians?
3. What is the way of the cross (1 : 5)?
4. What does Paul say real punishment is (1 : 9)? How do you understand this kind of spiritual death? What is spiritual living?
5. How can Jesus be glorified in man (1 : 12)? How can man be glorified in Christ?
6. Had Paul ever asserted that Christ's second advent would be during his life time (2 : 3-12)? What could account for such an idea?
7. What does Paul mean by the man of lawlessness (2 : 3)?
8. Who might the restrainer be whom Paul talks about (2 : 6)?
9. How can a God of moral order and of holiness send upon man "a strong delusion" (2 : 11)? What does Paul really mean by this statement?
10. Is it right for a minister of the gospel to live out of his ministry (3 : 8)?